

Questioning Techniques Module

At this stage of the call you need to encourage your customer to talk by asking questions. There are several reasons for this:

- To build a rapport with the customer
- To identify needs, wants and objectives
- To identify any problems that we can provide a solution for
- To make your customer feel we are interested in them and their business
- To lead the conversation to a point where you can start selling
- To get “buy in” from your customer

To achieve this there are different types of questions we need to use:

Open Questions

- Begin with why, who, where, when, what and how.
- To establish rapport at start of conversation.
- To open a topic.
- To encourage the person to talk about ideas and feelings as well as facts.

Closed Questions

- Begin with a verb; ‘Are you...?’ ‘Did you...?’
- To collect specific information.
- To gain confirmation.
- To bring the conversation back to the relevant subject.
- To check if you have understood or interpreted correctly.

Follow up or Progressive Questions

- To show interest and encourage the person to continue talking.
- To increase the quantity and/or quality of information collected so far.
- To confirm your understanding of the information collected so far.
- If further clarification or explanation is needed, then a fuller answer should be encouraged

Prefacing Questions

- This is simple technique of adding the phrases ‘May I ask...?’ or ‘Would you mind me asking about...?’ to the beginning of your question
- It softens the question, particularly if the subject you are enquiring about is sensitive

Labelling Questions:

- This involves letting the other person know why you are going to ask the question before you ask it
- The reason must be stated in terms of benefit to your client
- This ensures that they respond to your question fully

Specific Questions:

- To find out facts.
- A good direct approach.
- Useful to control the talkative person.
- To isolate specific information and facts.

Leading Questions:

- To lead the conversation to a point where you are able sell
- To highlight potential problems through suggestion
- To gain agreement from your customer

SPIN:

- Discuss, understand or explain the **situation** with the prospect
- Next identify the **problem** that exists or could arise
 - Explain, discuss or understand the **implication** of the problem for the prospect's business (i.e. What organisational improvement can potentially be achieved)
 - This effectively creates a **need** or opportunity to rectify the problem (by selling the product/service and;
 - The "payoff"

Remember to question in 3 key areas – Past, Present and Future. This will allow your prospect to think ahead about how they intend to get more customers.

Summarising:

This technique involves you drawing together the main points of the conversation:

- It demonstrates to the other person that you've been listening to them.
- It also ensures that you have heard and interpreted correctly
- Summarising encourages the other person to move forward and say more:
 - "So what has been agreed is....."
 - "So the main points of what you have said are....."
 - "So the most important things to you are....."

Once you've summarised it's a good idea to use a leading question to direct the conversation to the key benefits:

"If I could show you a really cost-effective way of re-structuring your energy usage and cost do you think you might be interested?"