

The Art of Catching Big Fish With Questions

To paraphrase the Chinese quote, *"give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and feed him for a lifetime"*, is restated for the professional Seller as; *"use a question borrowed from a book, gets you through a meeting", "learning how to create your own great questions, gets you successfully through a career"!*

There is a differentiating **"genuine and authentic presence"** experienced by the Buyer when the Seller has invested time, intent, purpose, and perspective in the creation of a question. The remaining pages are offered to providing you with the requisite knowledge and techniques required to **"teach yourself"** how to create and deliver, the Art of Asking *"intentful, purposeful & thought provoking"* questions.

The idea is not to ask questions, but rather become a **"Great questioner"!**



A key consideration for helping your customer create the eureka moment is to focus on **them & their customer**. At some point in the future, what scenarios or pressures will your customers' customer be responding to in their market? **What new offerings will they require to extend or maintain their competitive advantage?**

Listed below are some “**thought starter openings**” designed to help you kick off that Eureka moment with your Buyer.

- ✓ If you could create the perfect...
- ✓ What's the most innovative thing that...
- ✓ As you think about..., Imagine..., What if..., I wonder..., If you could...
- ✓ What impossible thing would you attempt if it were possible?
- ✓ What would you do with unlimited resources & budget?
- ✓ How much would customers pay for something they want, but doesn't exist today?
- ✓ What's likely to be the biggest challenge to your business 5 years from now?
- ✓ What set of products or solutions will make your current products obsolete?
- ✓ Is the business dream big enough for the future demands of your customers?
- ✓ Is your personal dream big enough?
- ✓ There exist highly valuable products today, that didn't exist 3-5 years ago, what product, solution, or capability will you and your customers be talking about 3-5 years from now?

More Persuasion Insights

On the next several pages you'll be reviewing numerous words and phrases that are designed to excite a variety of emotions. The intent of including these in the book are to serve as a "resource" and "thought starter" while providing you with a pool of words to draw from. Remember, you are trying to appeal to the Buyers emotions, as well as their logic. These are provided in no particular order.

- ✓ I'd like your opinion...
- ✓ What do you think...
- ✓ Your thoughts are valued...
- ✓ I'd appreciate your help...
- ✓ Your insights are appreciated...
- ✓ Based on your experience...

Substitute "And" in place of "But"

If not careful, the Seller may accidentally create a negative emotion even when utilizing a set of the 4 Magic Words. Imagine asking the Buyer, a "what do you think?" question. In response, the Buyer provides a well-articulated response. Upon hearing their reply, the Seller says, "I really appreciate your input, **BUT** I was hoping to hear a lot more detail around *blah, blah, blah*". Ouch! The Seller just basically said, "thanks for nothing". A more effective way to handle that would be to substitute, 'but' with 'and'. Listen how much different this sounds to the Buyer. "I appreciate your input on that **AND** I'd like to drill down a little deeper on that topic". In this example, the Sellers use of **AND** actually turns the Buyers' response into a compliment. Essentially saying, "I appreciate your input so much, I'd like to spend more time, getting deeper".

There is a strong tendency when listeners hear the word **BUT** that they remember more of what is said **after the but than before it**. Additionally, when listeners hear the word "and", there is a strong *tendency* to remember both statements, both **before and after** the "and". If the listener remembers one statement more than the other, most often the remembered statement is the one before the "and". Consider a sales manager's comments to their rep after making a call. "I thought the call went well **but** you could have handled that price objection much better". Or, "Overall I think the call went well **and** the next time try to anticipate the objection before getting it from the Buyer.

Let's get back to being self-focused for a moment. Structuring great discovery questions requires that we first, **ask ourselves** some questions to broaden our perspectives. A good beginning might include questions like these;

- ✓ *Am I thinking about the Buyers project in too general of away?*
- ✓ *Am I missing out on a much bigger issue & set of consequences?*
- ✓ *Could this project be tied in to planned future projects?*
- ✓ *How do I quickly get the 'big picture' without slowing them down?*
- ✓ *Which individuals could provide additional perspectives?*
- ✓ *How do I want to be perceived by this Buyer?*
- ✓ *Is it possible that I'm too narrowly focused?*
- ✓ *What topics may require some fluency to ask effective questions?*
 - **Questions, like the ones above, begin to stimulate a healthy pre-call thought process as to your preparedness.**
 - **You'll also want to remain inwardly focused to think critically about the *actual* questions themselves.**
- ✓ *What kind of conversation and feelings do I want to convey?*
- ✓ *Will this question likely encourage fresh thinking around an issue?*
- ✓ *Is this question different enough to call forward a new response?*
- ✓ *What assumptions are embedded in this question?*
- ✓ *Is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?*
- ✓ *Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised?*

More Thoughts On Words

“Think” versus “Feel”

A word of caution regarding the use of “think” and “feel”. While both of these words are considered “power” words, you’ll want to be judicious in their use. The difference between the two is that you can disagree with what I think, but you can’t disagree with how I feel. The feelings are mine. I own them and as such, are extremely difficult to change. (I’m sure that if you’ve been in a relationship for any length of time, no further discussion is needed here) My thoughts are my own too, but thoughts are more easily influenced than feelings. Which would you least prefer to hear when discussing price, “I think your price seems too high” or “I feel like your price way out of line”.



Illuminating Words

We want the Buyer's mind to come alive when we speak. We want to use words & phrases that not only sound different than the other sales people they speak to, but we want them to feel differently too. As mentioned previously, seemingly small changes in words may have large implications.

Imagine that you are in the process of developing a new relationship and suspect that the Buyer may be feeling a little reserved and holding back. Given the newness of the relationship, the Buyer is naturally being a bit cautious. What can you do? Look for places in the conversation to inject words that inspire confidence and trust.

Representative words that convey **safe choice**, and **confidence** are:

Absolute, absolutely, accurate, adaptable, adaptive, advantage always, approved, assured, certain, certainly, confidence conscientious, definitely, easy, effective, excellence, guaranteed honest, insure, protected, proven, reliable, responsive responsible, safe, secure, stable, supportive, truthful, trusted by

If you think about this concept for even a brief moment, you'll see how simple this is to incorporate into your daily persona. For example, do you want this new customer to be **satisfied** or **ecstatic** with your performance? Do you want them to be **pleased** or **thrilled** with the level of support? Do you want them to be **comfortable** or **confident** with your implementation team? It's obvious which responses provided the greatest emotion & feeling? Ask questions that invite and encourage a discussion that speaks to their reservations. This also allows them to be open and appreciative in your willingness to discuss what was a sensitive topic for them.

- ✓ "What is your most important consideration with vendor relationships?"
- ✓ "I'm curious as to who among the remaining evaluators answered differently than you and why that may be?"
- ✓ "Describe other aspects of vendor relationships you feel strongly about."

A Self Test

Looking At Your Self-assessment



First Take Off The Rose-Colored Glasses...

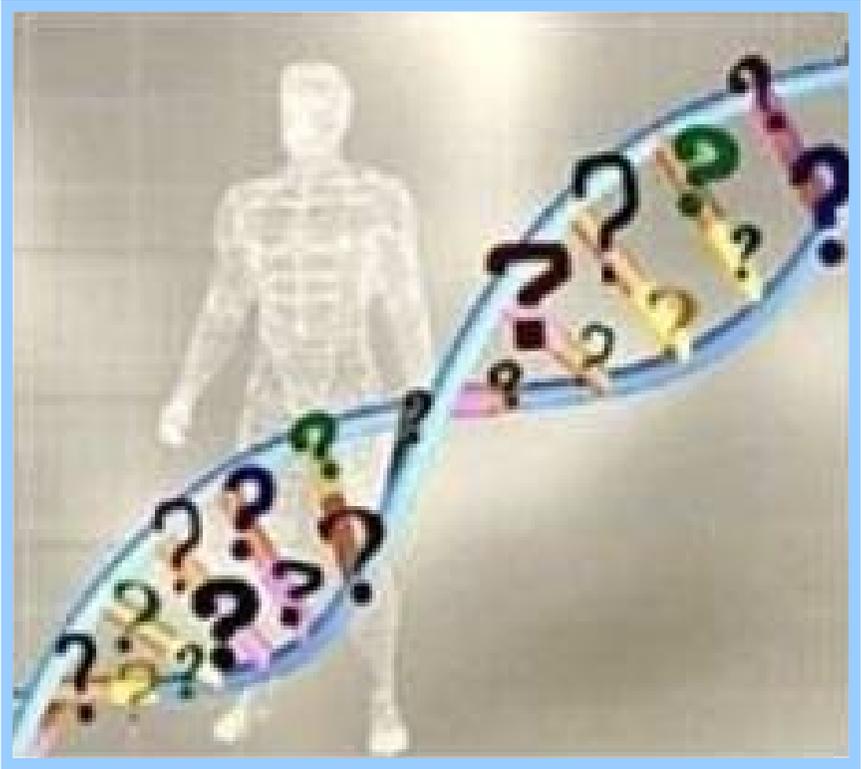
Self-reflections On My Questioning Skills & Preparation

Personal Perspective

- ✓ To what extent do you pre-plan key questions for critical meetings?
- ✓ Do you utilize any activity like the Questioning Tree?
- ✓ When was the last time you realized that your questions were robotic & soft?
- ✓ To what extent do you consider possible responses, to use if something goes astray? (objections vs answers)
- ✓ Who benefits most from your questions, you/buyer/both?
- ✓ Do I use gestures & facial expressions to show I'm interested?
- ✓ When communicating with others, do I pay enough attention to non-verbal signals - body language - facial expressions - gestures?
- ✓ Do I tend to finish people's sentences for them, when they pause?
- ✓ Do I offer verbal signals while listening like, "Go on", "OK", "I hear you", "Good"?
- ✓ How do I know that they know, I'm not just faking it?
- ✓ Do your questions serve to differentiate you from other sellers?
 - How do you know, and what are the signals, when that happens?

Buyer Perspective

- ✓ How often do I challenge buyers by asking questions that arouse their curiosity?
- ✓ When was the last time that happened?
- ✓ Am I guessing or was this a fact? How do I know?
- ✓ Do you make them want to know more?
- ✓ Do your questions expand the idea & lead to more discussion?
- ✓ Are your questions asked in context of role & responsibility?
- ✓ What's the last new idea that you tried implementing?
- ✓ What will you do differently on the next call?
- ✓ What's the last book you read on selling or negotiation?
- ✓ Do your questions move the buyer out of their own frame of reference in order to answer the question? Do they truly have to think before responding?
- ✓ Honestly, how many "can you tell me", "could you tell me", questions did you ask on your last call?



Imagine the impact if
You & Your Sales Organization
got a little infusion of
“Questioning DNA”

“Like a rising tide lifts all boats, so too,
Advanced Questioning elevates every aspect of selling”

Bobby Knight

bknight2question@gmail.com

www.2question.org

1-408-394-3899