



# Consultative Questions: Bringing The Sales Cycle To A Close

## OVERVIEW

Questions are a powerful tool that allows you to gain insight to the client's situation, problem and potential cures. In order to sell strategically and consultatively, you must become accustomed to asking well phrased, thought penetrating questions. More importantly, you must prepare questions in advance of the meeting.

Studies have shown that a well-phrased question will get the client to think about what you are saying and their situation better than your making a statement. The question forces the client to think and gains their attention. The well-phrased question cuts through all the clutter that is swirling around in their head. Questions also get the client to tell you their biases, preferences and even things they may not be consciously aware of. The question is part of an overall strategy that helps you change the game without the competition even being aware that the game changed. In addition, by asking great questions, the client cannot help but think of you differently, someone who is more consultative, and more experienced.

Every sales person, consultant, advisor, sales support person and executive should have a set of questions that are to be asked in various client situations. No one question or set of questions fits all situations. The questions that follow will stimulate your thinking and help you design your own questions for the client and specific the sales situation.

## QUESTION TYPE: BRING THE SALES CYCLE TO A CLOSE QUESTIONS

Bringing the sales cycle to a close can be critical in selling a strategic or complex project. Some clients tend to delay making a decision for fear that they will make the wrong the decision or they may be caught up in analysis paralysis.



The key point here is that we have to bring the sales cycle to a close sooner rather than later. I believe that a no-decision is worse than a decision going against me. At least you know where you stand and you are no longer investing time and energy into a deal going no where.

There are some who say "closing" is manipulative and you should allow the client to buy and not force closure. Well sometimes that does work and we should wait. But there are other times when it doesn't. I am a believer that the client should feel empowered and complete the decision process by saying, "Yes, let's do it." When they don't, a simple closing question can be useful to push the decision to completion.

There are other benefits to using closing questions. When you've demonstrated you are capable of handling the client's needs and there really is no reason for them to "kick the tires" any longer, by asking a non-threatening, simple, non-confrontational closing question, you can get your client to by-pass talking to the competition and just get on with making the decision. Asking the closing question at the right time can sometimes cut the sales cycle time in half.

Listed below are some of the questions that will allow you to take the sales cycle to an end. If you are afraid to ask these questions or concerned you are going to look desperate or pushy - think hard about this; you are in business and your time is valuable. You are not desperate or pushy. You would just like to proceed with the project because you know that you have the best solution for the prospective client.

These questions can be used by external and internal account managers, consultants or other professionals on the organization as a whole or within subdivisions and business units.

1. When would you like for us to begin?
2. Open up your Day-Timer, planner/calendar, or whatever else you have, look at your available dates and say, "I can begin week after next, if that time is permissible with you and your team. Does that work?"
3. Based upon the changes you would like to make to the proposal, can I go ahead and plan on us beginning the project on such and such date?
4. If I can get the costs of the project to meet the available budget, are you set for us to begin?
5. Once I provide the proposal, and assuming the proposal and price meet your needs, are you ready for us to begin the project?
6. Is there some work you would like for us to begin while we are here today?
7. Is there anything that is standing in the way of us beginning this engagement?
8. How soon after the proposal is completed would you like us to start?



9. My team is coming off a project next week, and they are available to begin the week after, would you like me to make sure they are assigned to this project and do not get identified for another project?

You don't get what you don't ask for. None of the above questions are pushy, abrasive or too assuming. It is usually in the manner and style in which you ask these questions that can seem abrasive and/or pushy. Also - timing plays a critical role as well - ask at the appropriate moment.

