



Consultative Questions: Establishing Project Results And Objectives

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: ESTABLISHING RESULTS THROUGH QUESTIONS

In selling strategic solutions and project you will want to identify the results needed to meet the client's objectives. You do not want to be guessing about what the primary aim is for the project. If you don't meet the project goals, you obviously will have a very unhappy client. This means you must establish clear measurable results so that you can define the successful completion by meeting those objectives.



By asking questions about the results needed, you set yourself up as a person and firm focused on outcomes. By establishing the results and the outcomes, you can focus your selling on the achievement of those results and how your firm is the best in meeting achieving those results.

This allows you to reduce the amount of subjective criteria based upon feelings or emotions that surfaces in the sales cycle that may be difficult to address.

Also by focusing on the outcome you can usually establish higher margins and a better relationship with the economic buyer and those responsible for the successful completion of the project. By focusing on outcomes, you set you and your firm as more strategic and a higher value and not a commodity provider who is focused on price.

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. What is the objective of this project?
2. What is the required outcome needed from this project?
3. When are you expecting to see the results?
4. What is the expected return on investment from this project?
5. What is the problem that needs to be resolved exactly?
6. How we will know if this project is a success?
7. What are the necessary metrics needed to be captured to determine if this is project meets the ROI?
8. Are you looking to gain cost savings (revenue growth, market share, reputation, etc)?
9. If this project is considered a success, what would that look like to you?
10. How can we measure these factors you define as a successful outcome?

Getting the outcomes defined early will help you establish credibility with your client and build a better proposal. In the end, the establishment of outcomes will also provide you with clear targets for the project team to hit and not get side tracked with ancillary needs or requests.

