



# Consultative Questions: Getting To The Economic Buyer

## 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: GETTING TO THE ECONOMIC BUYER QUESTIONS

Selling consultative solutions are usually strategic in nature. That is, they are strategic because the services and solutions have economic value to the organization and company. Economic value translates into cost savings or revenue generating - either directly or indirectly. Further, strategic services and solutions affect the reputations of the people who are making the buying decision. That is, if the project or engagement does not go well, there are negative consequences for those



who were involved with making the original decision. Because reputations and budgets are on the line, there are some people in the buying decision who will have more influence and power than others in the decision making process.

One of the key people in the decision-making process is the economic buyer. The economic buyer is the person who has the funding and the budget for the project. He or she authorizes the allocation of funds for the project. Because there are funds for the project, there is an expected return on this investment in money. Getting to the economic buyer allows you to find out more about the desired business outcomes and the return expected to justify the investment. Getting to the economic buyer allows you to develop the relationship and establish your credentials first hand and not rely on someone else in the client's organization to do your selling.

Getting to the economic buyer is important to you and your firm. If you are blocked from meeting with the economic buyer, you have to seriously question whether you and your proposal will be evaluated fairly and taken with equal merit as other providers' proposals.

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. Who will be authorizing the funding for this project?
2. I believe I understand correctly, that you have the responsibility for this project?
3. I believe I also understand correctly, that you have final say and signing authorization?
4. Who has final sign-off of this project?
5. Who in addition will be involved in this decision? And what are their roles?
6. Who will the people report to for this project?
7. Who will benefit from this project's successful completion?
8. Who is the sponsor of this project?
9. Do you have to get anyone else's approval and sign-off for this project?
10. Who will accept and/or reject proposals?
11. Can you sign-off for this project right now if we agree to go ahead?
12. If we both agree that we are right for this project, can we shake hands on the decision and move forward and in order that we begin immediately (to line up the resources)?

By asking these questions you are able to find out who is the final authority in authorizing this project. You are able to determine if you are meeting with the ultimate decision maker or a surrogate in the buying process. In addition, you will be able to find out the steps that you have to go through in order to close the business.

