

## THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

Asking questions is an art, and as a great salesperson, it is an art that you need to master. I read something the other day that the average 4-year-old often asks more than 300 questions a week. But the average college student asks only one. I don't know what happens, but I think as adults, we become very self-absorbed and we that curiosity.

The best scripts, the best and most effective sales presentations and negotiations are not pitches. They are question-based conversations that have a purpose in mind.

If you're serious about mastering this, take at least 30 minutes a week, and write out questions for different scenarios, so you can practice thinking questions versus statements. Questions you would ask buyers, questions you would ask sellers, questions for price reductions, questions for negotiations, and questions for tough phone calls or meetings that you might be facing.

Here's a great exercise that will make this easy for you. Get some index cards and keep them on your desk. Anytime you're going to go into a presentation or into a phone conversation, take a moment and write down 3 to 5 good questions. I want you to think about, who am I going to be asking these questions to? What am I looking to help them self-realize? When in the conversation do I want to ask them? Where am I trying to lead them?

I'll give you an example. Let's say I'm going into a buyer consultation. I might write down, "Mr. or Mrs. Buyer, what caused you to decide that now is the time you'd like to buy a home?" That's a great question because it gets in their head. Powerful questions build rapport, they engage the customer. So, they answer you, now you ask the next question: "Can you share with me, what are some of the most important features about the home, and how you're going to use those?" What's important to you in this next home? Then I might ask, "What is the timeframe by when you actually want to be living in the property?" And I might ask, "What are some of the questions and concerns that you have about the process?"

If you're asking a series of questions, it can sound a little bit interrogational. There is something called "question softeners." Now, you're not going to put one of these question softeners in front of every question - you're going to sprinkle them in to take the edge off.

**The softeners are:**

- I'm curious...?
- I was wondering...?
- May I ask...?
- Please tell me...?
- Tell me more.

Be sure that as you only ask one question at a time. When you string 2 or 3 questions together, they don't know which one to answer first, so they just don't answer.

Ask more specific questions. If you ask very broad or general questions, they may not know how to answer.

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Here's something we're often guilty of: We ask a question, and as they're answering, we're already speaking. When you do that 2 or 3 times in a row, they're just going to shut down.

I want you to ask the question, let them answer, and just allow a “pause... pause...pause.” And then speak. That shows, “I heard you, I’m taking it in and processing, because I’m really listening.”

Open-ended questions are great, because it gets them to open up and elaborate. These would be who, what, where, when, why, and how.

One of my favorite questions is the clarifying question. When they tell you, “I think this house is overpriced”. Reply, please share with me, what’s causing you to feel that way? You need to go 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 questions deep before you handle the objection. You want to really make sure you understand why they’re saying what they’re saying, and in answering these questions, they may realize their own answer.

Now, you may want to consider, (with their permission) recording your next listing presentation. I used to say, “Mr. or Mrs. Seller, I want to do a terrific job for you. We’re going to talk about a lot of things that are very important to you - with your permission, may I record our time together, so that I can go back, listen to it, and take some notes?”

Then go back to your office and listen to the recording: How did you sound? How can you improve? Count the number of statements you made, versus the number of questions you asked. Be sure you are not talking more than 50% of the time. You want them to talk 50%, and you talk 50% or less, and be sure that at least 50% of your conversation is asking questions.

To be good at this, you need to be curious about others. You need to suspend judgment. And that means don’t ask your questions in a tone that would sound judgmental. “Mr. Seller, why would you think that?” That sounds judgmental. “Mr. Seller, I’m curious, tell me, what caused you to have that belief?”

Stop thinking about yourself and what you’re going to say next, and instead really listen to them. To practice you can set aside 10 minutes each day to do the Question Game. Have someone ask you a question, answer the question, and ask a related question, and so on. What this game does is stops you from breaking into a rant where you’re doing all the talking.

Ask more questions, pay attention, show them that you care, and the rapport just magically happens.

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