

## How to Deep Dive into Questioning

We have all been guilty at one time or another of asking questions that metaphorically are like a rock skimming across a lake? By doing so the analytical side of a client is engaged and the conversation centres around cost, price, lower rates, discounts and ultimately sales objections are attracted. There is little if any emotions triggered.

### **Why skimp across the surface with questioning?**

- Salespeople don't have the skills
- Salespeople don't want to feel uncomfortable
- A combination of both?

A client can be in professional pain by feeling under pressure to significantly reduce high operational costs. They can also be in personal pain, the fear of losing their job or career. Client pain is common in sales compared to being ego driven. These clients, for example, can feel propelled to manage the largest organization in the industry, generate historic profits, or public recognition. Speaking to an ego driven client requires a different sales mindset.

### **Questioning structure**

Applying Profile, Issue, and Effect questioning (PIE) can draw out the full extent of the problem, or why an aspiration needs to be achieved. Importantly this results in related emotions being expressed.

#### **Profile questions**

Before approaching the client define the sales objective, ensure a solid foundation of information has been uncovered and any gaps of information identified. Create a minimum of five profile questions to ask the client that will fill the gaps of information. Ask questions linked to the problem or what ignites the client's ego.

Example: *"What have been your greatest challenges securing new business...Under the impending restructure how will your role be impacted...What propels you to aim for the top performance division?"*

#### **Issue questions**

These questions are asked in response to the information the client has provided about the problem or what they are driven to achieve. These questions narrow the scope of questions needed to be asked, create greater understanding for both the salesperson and the client, and provide valuable input for the recommended action/proposal.

Example: *"Why aren't the sales team competent in business development...What will you do if you need to accept a more junior role...What is the attraction in being promoted?"*

#### **Effect questions**

These questions are about the effect, or consequence of the problem or the feeling of exhilaration when the desired outcome has been achieved. Effect questions can build the complete picture of the impact on the organization and or the client, show cause and effect relating to other problems and lead to uncovering the real problem.

Examples: *“What will happen if you don’t address the lack of business development competence... How will you feel doing tasks you are overqualified to do...When you become the CEO how will you manage the organization differently?”*

### **Client motivation to buy**

There are three outcomes, two of which will motivate the client to proceed:

#### **1. Dormant pain**

The client isn’t aware of or denies the full extent of the problem. When this happens, the client rejects the need to act. When the client realizes they have made an error of judgement they will go directly into acknowledged pain.

#### **2. Acknowledged pain**

The client has admitted a problem needs to be addressed and they are looking for a solution. The acknowledged pain is shown through their non-verbal cues and their questions.

Example: *“I have a problem with...”* and *“I am looking for a better way to...”* Don’t jump straight into a solution. Ask more effect questions to uncover the full extent of the problem.

#### **3. Future vision**

Ego drive can ignite feelings of achievement, recognition and personal prestige creating a future vision the client will pursue.

**PIE** questioning is not linear nor is it static. It is natural to ask issue questions followed by effect questions then back to issue questions. It is a flexible process that allows client emotions to surface and feel the need to act because the pain or ego drive is far greater than the cost of the product or service.



Kurt is a sales practitioner who created sales records in five industries and won major sales awards including Salesperson of the Year. The products and services he sold were newly released, consultative, relationship and retail. He is a recognized sales expert, successful author and respected sales and personal development coach who has guided organizations and salespeople to vastly improved sales performance and profitability. His clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

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