



The Selling Fundamentals Series: Gaining Understanding

W Sales and Business Marketing Program
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

The Selling Fundamentals Series
Gaining Understanding

Module #5

The Sales Faculty
Western Michigan University

Purposeful Questioning

W

- The goal is NOT questioning - the goal is **MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**
- But the tools are...
 - Structure to the Questioning Approach
 - Toolbox of Good Questions
 - Active Listening Skills

© 2018 The Sales Faculty © Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Big Picture!

UNDERSTANDING is the Goal!

W

- Don't confuse the goal (**UNDERSTANDING**) with the tools
- The **TOOLS** are structure, questioning, listening & facilitation

DISCOVER a....
Challenge
Need
Problem

Gain a full
UNDERSTANDING
of that challenge
/ need / problem

CONNECT
with firm's
capabilities
(but don't jump into
this too quick!)

← Structure - Questions - Listening - Facilitation →

© 2018 The Sales Faculty © Western Michigan University



The Selling Fundamentals Series: Gaining Understanding

Achieving Understanding: Great Structure

The PQ Worksheet

Start with a structure so you know what areas of understanding you should be seeking

CORE NEED: Ultimate reason they are potentially buying. Never talk small picture without understanding the buyer's big picture! This almost always requires digging deeper!

DEAL LOGISTICS What, where, when, how?	<p>CRITERIA ISSUES</p> <p>Product Criteria: What expectations exist related to what product can / should do? What problems should the product solve? What solutions have they used in past? What does a great solution look like to this buyer?</p> <p>Service/Relationship Criteria: How does this customer define great service? What do they need / want from you, and from your company? Any past experiences that influence current decision?</p> <p>Price / Cost Criteria: Do they have a budget? What tradeoffs would they make to fit budget?</p>
DECISION LOGISTICS Who? What Process? Timeline?	
COMPETITORS Who else in game? Do nothing?	
OBSTACLES Any BIG issues up front?	

© 2018 The Sales Faculty © Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Great Structure

Why Use a PQ Worksheet?

- **Stay Organized**
 - By pre-planning your approach you increase your level of adaptability, while being productive
- **Note Taking** (and note storage)
 - Pre-organized notes structure allows you to efficiently and effectively take notes
- **Summary Tool**
 - If Understanding is your goal, verify that understanding before moving past Needs ID
 - Use Highlighter Approach to maximize this.

© 2018 The Sales Faculty © Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Great Questions

QUESTIONS: The Continuum of Receptive through Directive

←	→	
<p>"Big Box" FULL RECEPTIVE</p> <p>Focus on big picture goals or challenges, and uses responses to narrow down conversation</p> <p>"Wave a magic wand and tell me about your perfect meeting?"</p>	<p>"Middle Box" HYBRID</p> <p>Directed to an issue or category of problems, but use receptive style questioning.</p> <p>"For the group's accommodations, what are your thoughts and preferences?"</p>	<p>"Small Box" FULL DIRECTIVE</p> <p>Point the discussion to a specific problem to see if the buyer has this problem</p> <p>"For the business meeting will the participants being using laptops and thus need wifi and power?"</p>

© 2016 James A. Eckert, Ph.D.



The Selling Fundamentals Series: Gaining Understanding

Achieving Understanding: Great Questions

Questions Require Digging

Keep Digging

- Based on answers to questions - identify opportunities to **UNDERSTAND** and pursue with further questioning
 - Digging requires patience and focus. In "digging mode" the next question is determined by the buyer's answers to the previous questions.
- Failure to dig leads to **SELLING BLIND / OVER PRESENTING**
 - We have to insert our assumptions into the gaps we left, and often our assumptions are wrong. We jump into our presentation when we really don't understand the buyer & often present elements that are not actually relevant to the buyer.

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Great Questions

The Toolbox of Questions

- OPEN:** Ask the buyer to tell their story
 - MAGIC WAND**
 - Goofy - but it works
 - BEST/LEAST**
 - Good if they have an existing solution they are focused on.
 - CATCH-ALL**
 - Verify that there are not still uncovered issues
- CLOSED:** Ask for or confirm specific info
 - CONFIRMING**
 - Used constantly to verify understanding
 - PRIORITY**
 - Get buyer to rank issues for you
 - PERMISSION**
 - Polite way to move to a new topic (often actually used as a direction tool)

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Great Listening

Active Listening Technique 1-2

- The application of **FACILITATION** to the process of listening.
 - Rephrase - Feed Back - Summarize
 - Note taking is part of this process
- The application of **FOCUS** to the process of listening
 - Focusing on the moment and keeping concentration strong

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University



The Selling Fundamentals Series: Gaining Understanding

Achieving Understanding: Great Listening

Good Listening Technique
SILENCE IS GOLDEN



- Why ask a good question, if you are too impatient to wait for a good answer?
 - Practice saying nothing until you get an answer
 - STOP: "Like I was Saying....." or "Well, Because....."
- We talk too much to.....

<p>The Buyer We don't dig deep enough, or we re-ask questions, or we just move on after a short moment of silence. All cut listening short. (Discipline is the cure!)</p>	<p>Ourselves We hear something and it triggers an internal conversation that drowns out what the customer is saying. (Notes are cure!)</p>
--	---

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University

Achieving Understanding: Great Listening

Good Listening Technique
TAKE NOTES




- You are not listening if you are not taking notes
- Focus on efficiency: KEY WORD NOTES
- Circle or Highlight the most important Issues

Dealing with Multiple Facets to An Issue
Immediately write "1, 2,3...." and then ask what each are. Get them all identified, then go back & dig each of them.

Returning to an Issue
Immediately write a quick key word & "mark it" then when current conversation is complete, return to that issue.

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University

Final Thoughts



- Be prepared & organized, ask questions, listen, and facilitate to **ACHIEVE UNDERSTANDING**
 - Never to manipulate
 - Understanding makes presenting relevant and persuasive arguments significantly easier
- Practice - Practice - Practice

© 2018 The Sales Faculty @ Western Michigan University
