

Seven Turn Off Sales Questions

Quite often, sales people fall into a sort of rut and most often, that rut is defined by the fall-flat sales questions they'll open a conversation with. These questions create a groan as a response, though to be polite a person may not outwardly do so. Here are seven questions you should never, ever (EVER!) ask a client.

"What do you know about us?" --- This question seems to ask about the client's knowledge of your company and appears to be a "you-based" question, but in reality, this question is all about you, not the client. It's a question that asks them, inadvertently, why they aren't already connected with you and how could they be so stupid as to not know what you're all about. It's also one of the most-cliche'd lead-ins ever devised.

"What are your needs?" --- The salesperson who asks this question is the salesman who's failed to do any background research on the potential client. This question literally says "I know nothing about you, but you should buy from me anyway." The proper response should always be "Nothing you have."

"Do you want to save time/money?" --- Of course they do. Asking this question is ridiculous because everyone wants to save time and/or money. This is as lame as asking someone at the bar "What's your sign?" It's such an obvious pickup line that no one will respond to it well. This question can have several variations, but all are just as lame duck.

"Are you the decision maker?" --- You should never ask this question. It insults the person you're speaking with by telling them that you are unaware of their position and aren't sure who to talk to. A better way to approach the problem of determining who to talk to is to ask to set up a "decision meeting" with "anyone you think should consult on this." It takes the embarrassment out of the equation and creates a scenario in which the prospect can still take credit for the benefits gained when the decision is made.

"What is your budget?" --- Never ask this question. Until the client knows about everything you can offer and knows what their needs truly are, budget is not a concern and should not be. Asking this question without setting groundwork first means your and your client's approach will be wrong. Things should be decided based on need, not cost. A budget is always available when it's a need being filled.

"Would you make a referral?" --- Don't ask for blanket, generic referrals. Ask for specifics. Unless the person you're talking to is a solid, well-established client (in which case, you're hopefully getting referrals without having to ask), they are not likely to know enough about you to be comfortable referring you to anyone.

"Are you ready to buy?" --- Worse. Closer. Ever. If you have to ask this question, you've failed to sell the client. Closes should come naturally, without a question being asked.

