



## Questions: A sales person's best friend.

While talking with a client the other day, I happened to mention that Sales Concepts has been providing sales and customer service training for over twenty-five years. After this, the client said, "Wow, I guess you have seen and worked with a lot of sales people. What would you say is (as a whole) their biggest weakness?"

Upon reflecting on that for about two nanoseconds, the answer was obvious. Sales people, as a whole, don't ask enough questions! Why don't we ask questions? There are many reasons. Here are a few.

- Bad timing.
- It's none of my business. I don't want to pry.
- It is too hard to formulate.
- The customer does not know the answer.
- I don't want to look stupid.
- Oops, I wasn't listening.
- I just assumed that...
- Lack of preparation.
- That might be embarrassing.
- You are in *tell* mode.
- Defensiveness.
- I forgot.

This list could go on. Perhaps a more positive approach is needed. Let's take a look at the power of questions. When you ask a series of meaningful, well thought, well-prepared questions you come across as someone who cares. Caring is a natural bi-product of meaningful preparation. Questions can bail you out of a jam. Remember you can't say something wrong if the customer is talking. Open-ended questions help you prepare for what is coming. Ask questions so that you are able to deal with objections later in the sales process. By the way, asking questions is the best way to handle objections. You may think you know what your customers are saying, but do you understand what they mean or more importantly—what they want. There is no better way to uncover opportunities than to ask questions.

Now let's review that list one more time. Bad timing may be a reason to postpone a question; it's never a valid excuse not to ask it later. Jot down your questions as you talk with your customers so you can ask them later. Of course, it's better if you have them prepared in advance. The rest of the reasons we don't ask enough questions can be solved by better preparation. Spend some time before your customer encounters. Recognize and test your assumptions. Have your questions prepared in advance. That way after you leave you won't pound your forehead saying, "Why didn't I ask that?"

***The next tip —Aug 31 — Questions: a sales persons best friend.***

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