

# Using Questions to Lead a Conversation

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Questions provide a roadmap for the seller, guiding the sales call through the steps of needs development until exact needs have been discovered. The goal of asking questions is to uncover information and direct control.

Determining buying motives is the heart of problem identification. Understanding your prospect's exact need or justification will tell you what's needed to make the sale. Whatever the motive may be, this is the stage to discover needs and lead the prospect to conclude your product is right for them, and they should purchase.

It is important to note, anyone deciding to make a purchase must balance two opposing factors – the seriousness of the problem the purchase would solve versus the cost of the solution. Here are two types of probing:

### 1. Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions encourage the prospect to speak freely about a topic.

The prospect should not be able to answer with a yes or no. You can use keywords such as “what,” “how” and “why.” Phrases like “tell me more” and “what else” can also work to get the potential customer talking.

The more you can get your prospects to talk, the better off you are. They'll likely place more trust in you the more they share with you. You want them to tell you everything on their minds. To help remember this, I use the phrase “open the gates and let them roam.”

Examples of open-ended questions are:

- What are the best security decisions you have made?
- What are things that scare you about living here?
- How do you feel about your current business situation?
- What security opportunities do you see on the horizon?
- What is your biggest risk factor for this area?
- Why is this area your biggest concern?

### 2. Close-ended questions

Closed-ended questions steer the prospect to a specific topic of your choosing and limit the answer to one or two words. “Do you like this idea?” can get you a yes or no. You can use closed-ended questions to verify information. For example: “You enjoy this idea, right?” Regardless of their answer, get them talking by asking why.

Their usual response will be, “Because...” At this point, you're again getting information about what motivates them. They're telling you which way to go with your presentation. A way to remember this technique is “close the gates and pen them in.”

Examples of closed-ended questions are:

- Are you concerned about this area?
- Which of these two areas concern you the most?
- How many times have you done that?
- Are you happy with your current provider?
- How much did you lose?
- Who sleeps by this window?



As a rule of thumb, use open-ended probing to get the prospect talking – the more they talk, the more information they'll give you.

I like to start with open-ended questions. Ask them to tell you more about their situations, lifestyles, personalities or anything that helps you solve their problems. Use closed-ended questions to direct the conversation while still allowing prospects to talk. You control the topics and direction of the conversation. And lead them to the place you want them to go.

In the meantime, if you don't make a sale, you work for free.

Talk to you next time folks,  
Jack