



## Stop Quoting - Start Qualifying

May 12, 2005

Last month we talked about how a small improvement in skill could result in large increase in sales. This month and for the next several months, we will help you improve your skills by providing you with techniques that you can use at different stages within the sale cycle.

Let's start with a resolution to ***Stop Quoting and Start Qualifying***.

You are not a "Quote Jockey". You don't make commissions on quotes. You don't need the practice of quoting. You don't need to help the current vendor by supplying the buyer with your information. You don't need to make the buyer smarter. And you don't need to waste your time, effort or the resources of your company, quoting on something that you have less than a good chance of selling.

So stop quoting and start finding prospects that fit the profile of your ideal client. Start qualifying these prospects for "severe mental anguish"- the motivation to buy your product or service. Start qualifying them for their motivation to leave their current vendor relationship. Start qualifying them for their sense of urgency and ability to invest the resources required to buy.

How do you do this? First, by focusing on the right prospects. Second by asking the right questions. And third, by going to the next prospect when you find one who doesn't qualify to do business with you.

1. We're not going to spend any time now discussing who the right prospects are for your business. If you don't already know who you should be selling to, you need only look as far as your book of business (or the book of the most successful salesperson you know), and determine which clients make you the most money with the least amount of time/ energy.
2. Once you have a list of prospects/ appropriate decision makers, and you get the opportunity to meet, you will begin qualifying for severe mental anguish - the prospect's motivation to buy your product or service:

This is tricky. You will have to get past the rhetoric that invariably accompanies initial interviews. You will have to drill down past the first indication of a problem (pain indicator). Most salespeople, when they uncover the initial indications of problem, stop digging and go immediately to the solution. At this point in the relationship, this is inappropriate since you won't yet know if the problem is big or bad enough to motivate the prospect to take action or whether they even have a budget.

Drill down. Get more information. Get them to continue talking about the problem. Get them emotionally involved.

I know you know to do this by asking questions. But the **Rule of 3R** needs to be applied: **Ask the Right question, the Right way, at the Right time.** If you do this you will help the buyer discover that they have a problem and that they want to fix the problem. Then they will ask you if your product or service can make the problem go away.

Here is a SAMPLE approach. (This needs to be planned. Not canned.)

Once you ask your initial question that gets a pain indicator response, e.g. "I'm unhappy with...", you say the following:

🚩 "Tell me more about that." (Ask in a nurturing way and then don't say anything. Let them respond.)

🚩 "And?" (Ask like it's a question- They will keep talking.)

🚩 "How long has that been a problem?" (Don't step over your own question. Ask it and don't say anything. Let them think. Don't be tempted to talk just because there is silence.)

🚩 "What has your current vendor done to help you with this problem?" (If they say "Nothing.", then you should respond with, "Hmmm, I wonder why.")

🚩 If they indicate that the current vendor has done something, you should respond with: "How is that working?" (Keep in mind if it were working you wouldn't be there.)

🚩 "How much will it cost if you don't fix the problem?"

🚩 "Is the problem bad enough for you to undo your current vendor relationship?"

🚩 "Do you want to fix the problem?" (Assume they say "yes".)

🚩 "Are you sure?"

🚩 "Suppose (Magic word) we could fix the problem, what would happen next?"

You must have the ability to listen carefully to what the prospect is saying because that will lead you to your next question and will help you get closer to the emotion associated with the problem.

Remember, you are trying to get to real emotion, because this is what will motivate the prospect to buy. And if there is not enough emotion, you don't have a real prospect.

Of course, qualifying for money is equally important, and you will want to make sure there is a budget for solving the problem.

3. If you are unable to qualify a prospect for mental anguish to solve a real and immediate problem with real available money, it's time to move to the next prospect. Don't waste your time trying to create a buyer where none exists.

Unfortunately, most salespeople keep non-prospects in their pipelines when they should be eliminated. These non-prospects take up time and energy that should be directed to finding new contacts, qualifying real prospects and selling.

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