

Sales on the Line: meeting the business demands of the '90s through phone partnering

Sharon Drew Morgen, Metamorphous Press

This is the best book on telephone selling that we have come across.

(Sharon has also published "Selling with Integrity: reinventing sales through collaboration, respect and serving" which offers a sales model based on values increasingly prominent in organisational improvement efforts but often overlooked in the sales function. Both may be purchased through the CorporateCoach web site.)

Summary of the questioning process and how it works to gather information:

Inviting questions are used to invite the client into the conversation. They initiate the conversation, begin rapport-building, and start the customer speaking.

- Are you the correct person I need to be speaking with?
- Do you have the time to speak with me?
- Would you like to speak first, or should I?
- Would you mind telling me about your environment?

and for an *existing* customer:

- Is this a good time for us to speak?
- Have you been bearing up under all the strain?
- How is the new programme working?
- Do you find that the product or service is making a difference?
- Have you discovered more information you need from me?
- Could you tell me about what has happened since we spoke last?

Facilitating questions begin the information gathering process by extracting quality information which may be stored in an unsystematic fashion in the customer's consciousness and is difficult to access without assistance. These questions promote the client's environment.

- What is important to you about . . . ?
- How is that important?
- If you could do it or have it the way you want, how would it be?
- What does this get you or do for you?
- What's getting in the way of your creating your solution now?
- What stops you?
- What happens when . . . ?
- What would happen if you do or don't?
- What do you need in order to . . . ?
- How will you know when . . . ?
- What would you need in order to . . . ?

Specifying questions are about defining, differentiating and enumerating. They bring greater clarity to the newly emerging information. By asking *what*, they clarify each point and the emerging problem space.

- What do you mean by . . . ?
- What would you need to . . . ?
- What stops you or helps you?
- What's the difference for you between X and Y?
- What would that look, sound or feel like?
- What would you accomplish out of doing it that way?
- What obstacles do you see or feel would come up?
- Is what you have in place giving you what you want?

Organising questions bring even greater specificity to the tasks involved in solving the problem. They focus the attention on the possible solution and how to accomplish it. It is here that the customer realises the problem: there are often insufficient resources on hand to assist her in reaching her outcome.

- What would need to be in place for that to happen?
- What would you do first?
- Do you anticipate a problem getting the resources you need?
- What would help you solve that piece of the puzzle right now?
- What would be your first step in creating that for yourself?
- How would you go about solving that problem?

Summary questions should be introduced every three or four statements. They clarify understanding of both you and your client.

- Is what you are telling me . . . ?
- So what you're saying is that . . . ?
- Let me get this right. Are you saying . . . ?
- I'm going to sum up what I think you said, and I need you to tell me if I understand it correctly, okay?
- Would you mind explaining that to me in a different way?

Differentiating questions clarify meaning. They bring specificity to general statements (*always, everyone*) to clarify the points which need further examination. They are used as needed.

- Who, specifically? Do you really mean *everyone*?
- Every *single* person?
- When, specifically? Is it really *sometimes*?
- Does it *ever* change? Under what conditions?
- Under what conditions would it be different?
- Is it or was it ever different?