

Finding the Need is Only Part of the Sale

By Mark Dembo and Thomas J. Baskind

Many of us in sales are taught to believe that the most important job of the salesperson is to “find the need” of our prospects. If we can uncover “needs” then our job is easy; we just need to show our prospect how our product or service fills that need. Right?

Well, the problem with that approach is that it only addresses part of the pie. Think about it. What do you do when YOU need something? Let's say you need to buy a new computer; do you sit around and wait, hoping that a computer salesperson is going to call you? NO, of course not; you go out and you fulfill your need.

So, as a salesperson, if people really NEED your product or service they will pick up the phone and call you to place an order. If that's the case, why aren't you selling more??? Oh, you say, they're buying from your competitor. Or, you might tell me, “Well, they just don't KNOW that they need my product or service; my job is to “find the need” and to “build their pain.”

Let me give you another way to think about this...suppose, just suppose for a moment, that instead of just focusing on “needs” we broaden our thinking: as a salesperson you want to **find out about what people DO**. Your job is to find out and understand what they're doing now, how they're doing it, who they're doing it with, when they're doing, why they're doing it that way, and then to help them do it better. Makes sense, right?

When you adopt the “DO” philosophy over the “NEEDS” philosophy, your thinking and the questioning will become much broader. By asking “do” based questions you get better information from your prospects, which in turn allow you to make a proposal that will make much more sense to the prospect. And the only reason people buy something is because it **makes sense** to them.

By asking “do” based question you are creating a conversation which engages your prospect. When performed at its best, selling is an extended conversation; it is not an interrogation by the salesperson, and neither is it a “product dump” where you aim to tell your prospect anything and everything you can about your services.

What are some examples of “do” based questions? Well, here are a few:

- “What are you currently doing about _____?”
- “I'm just curious, what made you decide to do it that way?”

- “How did you decide to do that?”
- “What are you hoping to accomplish in the next quarter, year, three years...?”
- “Tell me exactly what you do here?” Or, “tell me what your key areas of responsibility are?”
- How was this decision made in the past?
- Will the decision process be the same this time around?

Take some time to make a list of questions that you can ask that are relevant to your business. Some of the questions may not seem to have a logical or direct tie to your product or service; that's OK. In fact, that's good! By focusing on what your prospects do and how they do it, you are opening up the whole dynamic of your sales call into a true conversation; one that will help you better understand the goals, objectives, and needs of your prospect. By broadening your conversation in this way you are then able to make the proposal or recommendation that will **make sense** to your prospect.

And, in the end, the only reason people buy something is because it makes sense!

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