

Worksheet: Assertive Questions

How to ask more Assertive Questions

Overview

More assertive questions are more invasive and threatening and, as a result, more risky. They introduce potential conflict and confrontation into the interaction. It takes more finesse and human relations skills to ask them without being offensive. The more assertive style observed in HASP type sellers has a lot to do with how they ask questions in a more assertive way. They typically ask more questions about the buyer's decision making criteria and beliefs. If this is not done skillfully, it can come across as overly invasive and confrontational because it can feel, to the PCCR, that the salesperson is telling her she is wrong in her thinking. This can cause a defensive reaction and a spiraling down of trust and rapport. It's important to note that if more assertive approaches get you better information but destroy trust and rapport, you very well may win the battle but lose the war in terms of making the sale.

The real art of Compete Selling is how we position and set up our questions so they feel less threatening and are more interesting to respond to while allowing the buyer to reveal to us his biases that may or may not be helpful to us.

Three techniques to set up a question:

Let's look at three different techniques to set up a question. Keep in mind, the goal is to soften the setup of a provocative question in a way that is easier to respond to, is less threatening and much less likely to cause a defensive, trust lowering response. These approaches can also help you project more credibility, professionalism and competence which can have a big impact on how willing the prospect is to truly open up in their responses. The three approaches are:

- 1. Conventional vs. Contrasting Thinking Around Decision Making Criteria**
 - a. We briefly explain conventional thinking that is likely similar to the limiting thinking of the buyer and contrast that with more innovative and forward thinking we're seeing from other customers and ask the prospect to react to the contrast.
- 2. The Observation Based Question**
 - a. We set up our more provocative question with an observation we've seen that is relevant to one of our competitive advantages
- 3. "A question I often get"...question tee up**
 - a. We set up an assertive question by introducing a question we often get and then answer that question with the CPET process, which ends with an open ended question

Same Question in all three examples

We'll use the same question in all three examples but set them up with the three different approaches. the question will be:

“What’s your take on the best way to capitalize on this accelerating trend in terms of connecting with those profitable business travelers and tourists that aren’t going to see or hear any radio or TV ads?”

1. Conventional vs. Contrasting Thinking Approach

*“...Barbara, **conventional thinking we’ve heard for years** from very successful retail entrepreneurs like yourself is that radio, TV and print has worked well in the past, it hits a wide range of people and it does a great job of keeping your brand top of mind in the marketplace...**Some of the contrasting thinking we’re hearing from retail business owners** that are growing the fastest in today’s hyper competitive market for new customers, is that a more balanced blend of digital media and in particular mobile, is producing better results because every day, more and more people in your target market are making decisions on what restaurant to go to based on where you’re positioned on their phone apps. A growing percentage of customers use apps on their phone to help them find places to eat every day, especially highly profitable business travelers and tourists...”*

The question is sets up is...	“... What’s your take on the best way to capitalize on this accelerating trend in terms of connecting with those profitable business travelers and tourists that aren’t going to see or hear any radio or TV ads?”
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2. The Observation-Based Question Approach

“...Barbara, just last week, I was talking to an owner of some furniture stores that told me he had been a total believer in TV and Radio for decades, but had noticed a steady drop off of business in the last couple of years even though he was spending even more on advertising. He was also disappointed with his first attempts at using social and digital ads to increase traffic. After he changed his strategy and shifted more of his budget toward a well planned mobile campaign, he saw an immediate impact on increasing traffic to his stores. He was really excited with the results because he found a way to reach new customers that TV and radio simply couldn’t get to...”

The question is sets up is...	“... What’s your take on the best way to capitalize on this accelerating trend in terms of connecting with those profitable business travelers and tourists that aren’t going to see or hear any radio or TV ads?”
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3. The “a question I often get” question tee-up approach

*“... **Barbara, a question I’ve been getting a lot recently** from business owners like yourself is, why is TV and Radio seemingly producing less results than it used to (watch how we use the CPET technique) and it’s a great question. What we’re hearing more and more from the faster growing businesses in retail is that research shows, affluent, big spending consumers are using digital media more and more to decide where to go to shop and eat. They spend more time looking at their phone and ipad screens than watching TV. They’re engaging in dynamic ads on Facebook and using search to find places to eat. They also realize that out of town visitors rely almost entirely on digital media, and in particular, digital media on their mobile devices, to decide where to eat and are using digital campaigns to attract more and more tourists and big spending business travelers.”*

The question is sets up is...

“... What’s your take on the best way to capitalize on this accelerating trend in terms of connecting with those profitable business travelers and tourists that aren’t going to see or hear any radio or TV ads?”

How these Compete Selling Questioning Approaches Work

With all three of these approaches, we introduce an insight into the conversation and ask the prospect to respond to it. The discovery process can feel awkward, forced and interrogative if we just drill one question after another. These three techniques allow us to ask questions in more interesting ways. Here’s what all three approaches have in common:

- The HASP introduces an insight or thinking that is different from the way the prospect thinks
- The new insight is aligned with the thinking of customers that prefer the approach of the HASP
- The HASP is not pushing a product/service or even mentioning the opinion of his company
- The question is open ended, conversational and designed to get the prospect to react to a different point of view
- All three approaches allow the HASP to bring new ideas into the conversation and still keep the prospect in question answering mode

Step One - Develop Your Master List of Assertive Questions

The most effective HASP's know the questions they want to ask in advance. They have thought through their questions and ideally have a master list of more assertive questions they can sift through to select the best questions for the call they are planning for. We all need to do the same thing. Ask yourself the following questions that may help you develop a great list of questions you can draw from over and over:

- What are the likely concerns or objections many of your prospects have? What are some questions that can get them to talk about them?
- What are some new and better ways of thinking you'd like to see the prospect consider? What questions can be used to get the prospect's opinions on these new ideas?
- What ideas, approaches or change might the prospect be resistant to? What questions could get the prospect to open up and share those with you?
- What opinions might the prospect have that are most likely a barrier to your objectives and what questions would help the prospect share those opinions with you?

After you've developed a list of at least 5 more assertive questions, use the worksheets to prepare and practice how to set up and ask those more assertive HASP questions.

The 3 different worksheets you can use are: (possibly a link to each one)

1. [Conventional vs. Contrasting Thinking Approach](#)
2. The Observation Based Questioning Approach
3. The Question I Often Get Question Tee-Up Approach (CPET)

