



The Questions that Turn Objections into Opportunities



I was brought in to coach an AE, let's call her "Susan," who was consistently struggling to hit quota. I audited a few of her sales calls and I immediately noticed a pattern. When an objection was raised by the prospect, Susan's tone changed, she sounded defensive, her speech sped up, and her confidence disappeared.

Susan had a habit of "overcoming" objections by using words like a blunt object. This is a difficult habit to break, but top reps know you can not talk your way out of an objection.

Susan saw objections as conflict, something that put the sale at risk and therefore threatened her success, so she reacted by armoring up.

Objections are born out of fear. The prospect fears they will spend money and not get ROI, they will look bad if it doesn't solve the issue, or run into resistance from co-workers who fear change.

When I hear an objection, I'm grateful. Because objections:

- Reveal what the prospect is thinking – including their fears.
- Enable us to correct miscommunication.
- Separate suspects from prospects (some objections are instant disqualifiers.)

Until you understand the prospect's fear, no amount of talking at them will close the sale. If you develop the

habit of seeing objections as an opportunity to reduce or eliminate the fear, you will seek to gain additional information rather than trying to talk your way through the conflict.

When you use this strategy, you'll close more deals and stop wasting time on unqualified prospects or prospects that are not in a position to buy.

The way to gain information is to ask questions. Let's cover some of the right questions to ask and the right times to ask them.

Consider this list of common statements, that you might not consider objections:

- Can you send me information?
- Call me next year.
- I'm running into a meeting.
- I need to think about it.
- I need to talk to others.
- We're happy with our current vendor.

Now is the time to ask questions, not get defensive. Seek to understand. I call this "peeling back the onion."

You need to get through all the layers to figure out what's really at the core of the fear.

How you ask the questions is just as important as what you ask. Focus on asking open-ended questions that start with the words: How, What, and Who when possible.

Often the first objection isn't the real concern. When you ask open-ended questions, prospects reveal more. You can then uncover the root issue.

Once you believe you've gotten to the root issue, asking a closed-ended question is a great way to confirm what you heard and let your prospect know you're really listening.

Here are some examples of common objections and questions you can ask to dig deeper. (Remember, when we're outbound prospecting, the goal is to determine if there is fit).

“Can you just send me more information?”

I love this “blow off” objection. Respond with, “Ms. Prospect, I'd be happy to send you information. To ensure that I send information that would be relevant can I ask you a couple of questions to help me determine what would be valuable?”

“We're happy with our current vendor.”

This is valuable information. They determined they had a need and were willing to spend money to solve it. Ask questions to learn more:

- “How long have you been using ABC company?”
- “What was the issue you were trying to solve?”
- “What was the main reason you chose them?”
- “When does your contract come up for renewal?”
- “Are you willing to learn more about our product/service to compare with what you have now?”

Let's try a fan favorite!

“We don't have any budget”

In this case there is no fear to identify, they just have a, hopefully temporary, situation. A closed-ended question works best.

- “Oh- have you already spent your budget this year on X?”
- “How have you solved X issue?”
- “How are non-budgeted initiatives handled?”

If they're bluffing these questions call their bluff and push for a real answer. If they really don't have a budget, you've disqualified the prospect and can put them into your nurturing system and move on.

Last but not least,

“We're under contract for the next 9 months.”

This one is harder, because they've already invested, but there is always a reason to switch vendors. Here are the questions to ask:

- “I see, how long have you been with that vendor?”
- “Who is the vendor?”
- “What made you decide to use them?”
- “What would have to happen for you to switch vendors before the contract is up?”
- “Would you be open to speaking again 90 days before your contract renewal?”

If they are adamant about staying with the other vendor until their contract is up, move them to a nurture program and move on.

Now it's your turn to break that habit of trying to talk your way out of objections and develop good habits and skills to use questions to transform objections from roadblocks to opportunities.

Remember, old habits are hard to break. But once you form this new habit you'll not only be closing more, you'll be doing it with ease and without losing your cool. ■

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