



QUESTIONS TOOLKIT

HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS
TO GET YOU ANSWERS THAT MATTER

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What has fascinated me about working with and managing customers is the idea of getting to the truth with our customers. Outstanding account managers recognize that to get to the truth with their customers, they must arrive with no agenda.

They look through the eyes of their customers every day to better understand their fears, desires and goals. Once they do, they get closer to what I call the 'truth zone'. This place is where they can empathise at a high-level and enable their customer to feel safe. Safe enough to tell them what matters most.

In the process the account manager, consultant and their company discover who they need to be in order to become who their customers need today and tomorrow.

Account managers and customer serving professionals who are truth finders do this from a place of empathy and opportunity and can quickly become a trusted adviser.

We need to prepare for those moments for when we're in front of our clients with a clear view of how, what and when to ask questions that get answers we want.

This question tool kit's ideas and principles give you a simple framework to prepare for more effective and profitable client conversations. Importantly, it will enable you to get to the truth you need to know faster.



QUESTIONS ARE THE
ANSWER

ALLAN PEASE

As simple as that phrase is, it has changed my whole perspective on the value and benefit of great questions in sales. As a business owner, key account practitioner, and a coach for sales professionals, asking questions is a critical skill. It helps clients discover new solutions and challenges sales professionals to change those behaviours that aren't effective.

One of the practices I want to challenge are the questions we ask in sales. The archetypal questions of who, where, what, how or closed and open are peppered throughout our training's and education. These trainings are great for telling you what types of questions you could ask. However, they give no guidance for developing questions that get you answers that matter.

As sales professionals we can be so caught up in asking questions that we never ask, "Do we know the reason why we're asking questions? What's the purpose?" These goals should shape the direction of our questions.

Of course, there are a whole host of reasons you might need to ask questions to your clients.

- To understand what specific pressures your contacts are under in a new role.
- To understand the impact changes in your clients industry might have on their business.
- To understand the impact of a key person leaving the business.
- To understand the shift in priority of their business.

All of these are helpful reasons to ask questions

I'd like to propose that the number 1 reason for questions is to CLARIFY. Let's see one powerful way how.



SUCCESSFUL QUESTIONS
THAT GET YOU THE TRUTH

Questions are like a bridge that connects knowns and unknowns, decisions and non-decisions and actions and non-actions.

The questions we ask are our opportunity to ensure that we're moving in the right direction with our client. It leads us to answers that help us know if we need to act now, pivot, get rid of something, solve something...you get the picture.

Once you understand the purpose of your questions you can then be more intentional with what you ask.

You can walk away from a conversation with every piece of information needed, knowing what to do and what not to do.

- What is that one thing that you really want to know? Why?
- What is the one truth you haven't fully understood (desires, goals and blocks)
- Does it help you and the other person achieve a goal?

Do your questions today help you solve, support, shape or sell something to your client?

Let's explore the '4S' model.

Solve – enables you to recognise and deeply understand your client their challenges and where you can be of most value.

Example: How would you describe the impact to you and you're department today with the new changes to the business?

Support – Helps you clarify a new project, offer additional insight or challenge?

Example: Where do you see as the most important place we can support you considering the change your department is facing?

Shape – Sets expectation for how you work together, manage challenges, deepen relationships between you, your company and their business.

Example: What do you see as the main area we could look at to improve our relationship with you and the business?

Sell – Ethically position additional services to help them solve future problems and achieve greater results together.

Example: How do you think we can begin planning for continued results in the next 12 months?

As simple as these questions are, when you apply this framework of thinking to the planned conversations you have, you will become a master at asking questions. And you will be known as an insightful person of value in your client's world.

Note: All of these questions are fine in their own right. But they should always be asked with the intent to deliver value and benefit to client.



QUESTIONS EXERCISE

SOLVE QUESTIONS (WRITE OUT FIVE QUESTIONS)

SUPPORT QUESTIONS (WRITE OUT FIVE QUESTIONS)

SHAPE QUESTIONS (WRITE OUT FIVE QUESTIONS)

SELL QUESTIONS (WRITE OUT FIVE QUESTIONS)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Spending 5 min to reflect every week is an activity that the 5% account managers, sales leaders and professionals who are highly successful practice.

Your ability to practice the art of reflection weekly will help you move past blocks, find solutions and grow personally.

What questions haven't you asked your clients that could help you meet your goals this week?



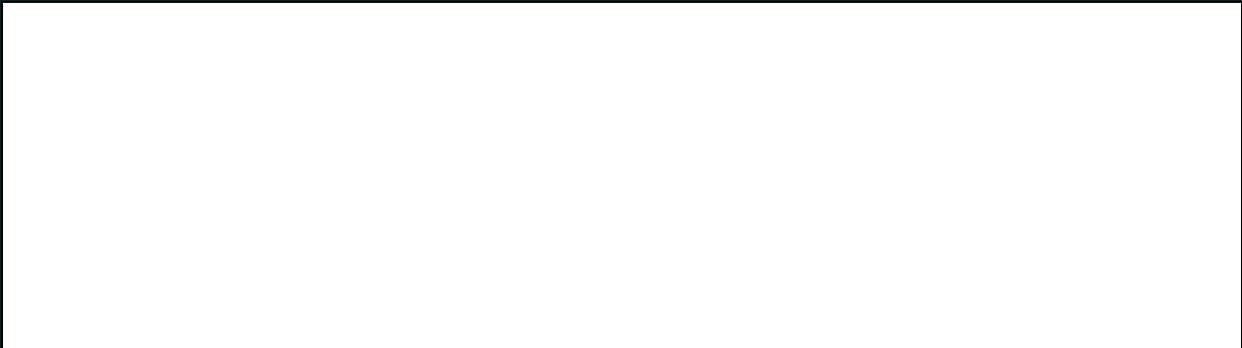
What don't you know about what impacts your customer decision process that will move you to the next stage?



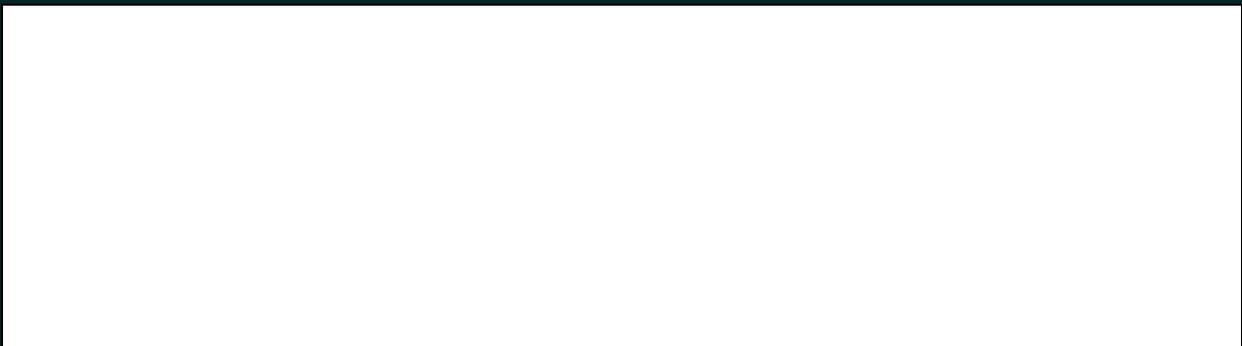
Why would your client buy from you now rather than later? If not now, what would need to change?

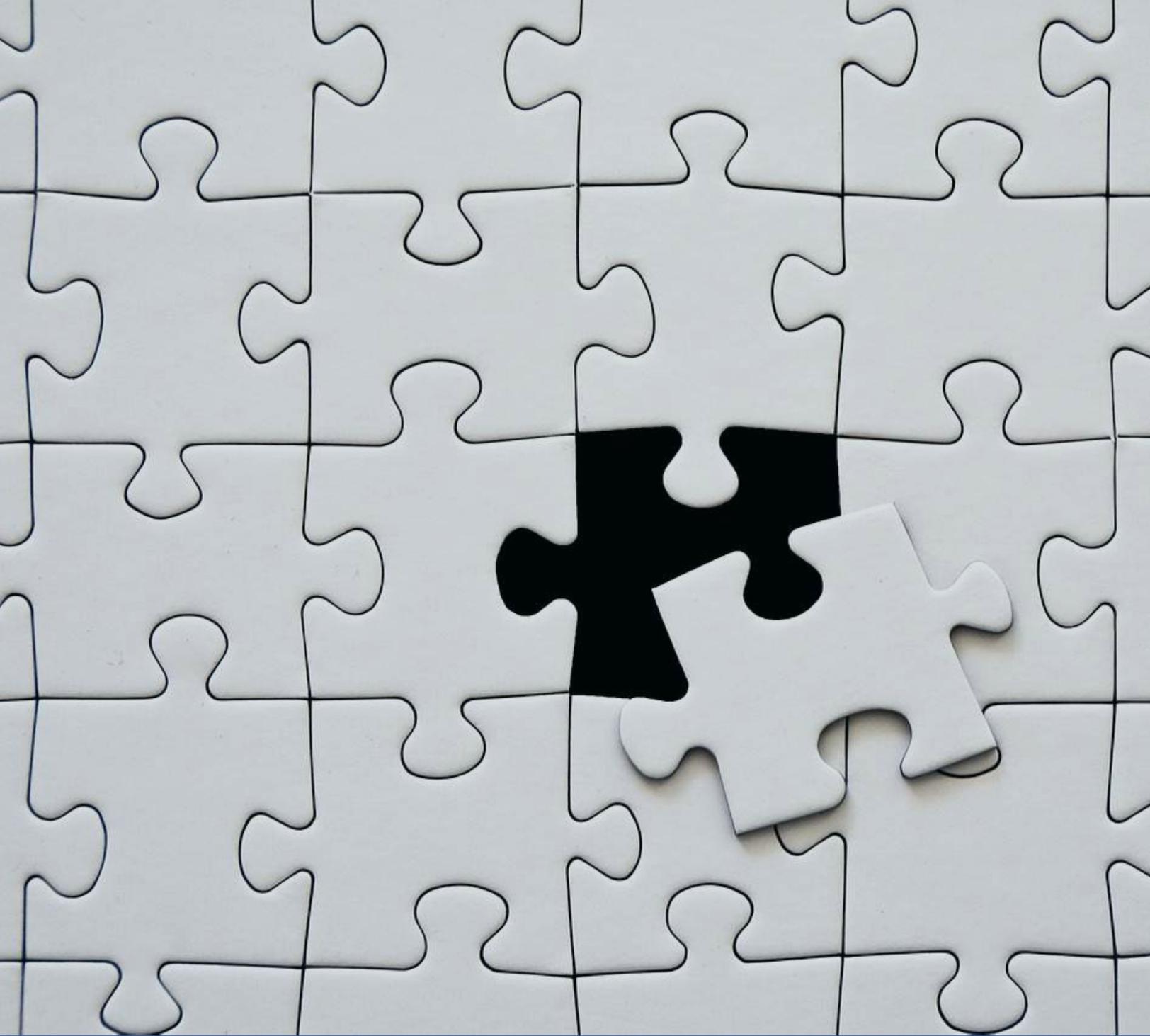


What other influencers have you not identified, externally or internally, that could help move your customer relationship or opportunity forward?



Have you determined the true extent of your customer's commitment to the relationship and opportunity? How do you know? What is the best way to find out?





THE QUESTION THAT
CHANGES EVERYTHING

Write down the top 20 questions you would ask a client in your first 5 meetings and label the purpose of those questions.

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Now imagine you could never ask those questions again. Rewrite all of them according to their intended purpose and outcomes.

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14 SAMPLE TRUTH FINDING CUSTOMER QUESTIONS

Below is a list of some powerful account management questions. These questions will stir your creative thinking around new ways you can get answers that matter to growing your customer sales and relationships.

By no means is this list final. There are 100s more I've personally crafted and learnt from others. These are just a sample. If you like the look of them then you'll get real value from getting connected to my weekly emails.

QUESTIONS

Question 1: If we were to start the proposal again and add even more value to it what would that look like?

Action with question: Take a step back – evaluate their answer. You can use this later for upsell possibilities or future support for their business.

Question 2: Who in your departments would get value if we added this one thing?

Action with question: You need to know what that one thing is. Name a department and start cross sharing to build in a larger or separate proposal for that department on the same call. This may give you access to people you may have not yet spoken with.

Question 3: Which one of these options feels like the biggest risk? What specifically made you think that?

Action with question: This is a fascinating questioning to gauging the options of least resistance. It doesn't mean you wouldn't go back to that area. The question helps you find out where you can begin to remove risk as a process, rather than just once.

Question 4: How often do you get feedback on results of products/services used by your employees?

Action with question: This is a great question because the answer is typically very little. You want to stand out by proactively discovering ways to do this, so you be at the front of their mind. Asking this question sets you up to do this.

Question 5: Who are the most challenging people to manage within your business? What is the impact and connection of that relationship?

Action with question: I love this question. Many will be very honest if you do this in rapport and in a truly curious way. They may ask you why you're asking. Your answer is simply knowing how best to work with them so they can win in the process.

Question 6: What one thing would you like to see us do more of for you?

Action with question: This question is not often asked. Customers usually have an answer. The answer they give you is a reason to come back to speak to them and build on future proposals.

Question 7: What is the most important value practice by people in your organisation?

Action with question: Value based questions can hit a nerve but are very powerful. The idea is you want to get to know what is driving behaviour and interaction within your client's business. The better you understand their culture the better you can communicate with them.

Question 8: How do you and your organisation celebrate success?

Action with question: I've never heard anyone ask this question. I firmly believe that you need to pay attention just as much to your customer's joys as their pains. If they can celebrate with you, they're also more likely to come and share other things with you.

Question 9: What is the one most important goal you want to achieve in your career?

Action with question: This is a powerful question. People move on. If you understand where your contacts are heading and help them, guess who goes with them.

Question 10: What's your department's most important goal this year?

Action with question: Departmental goals are more strategic and are often layered. You should understand the goal and who set it.

Question 11: What is your CEO's most important goal this year?

Action with question: You can replace CEO for another senior position out of reach but in the view and relevance of your contact. Having a view of all parties and seeing the common connections will be important as you build future strategic proposals.

Question 12: How could we collaborate to ensure every user in the company gets maximum use and benefit from our service?

Action with question: Account management is about getting to the truth of things that impact how you sell. If you can maximise the use of your products, you'll have more compelling reasons to sell more.

Question 13: If there were one person in the business I absolutely needed to know as we build our relationship, who would that be?

Action with question: The referral question of the century!

Question 14: What are the most interesting opportunities from us working together?

Action with question: This question gives you a current perspective of future opportunities.



WHAT NEXT?

"Asking the right questions takes as much skill as giving the right answers" - Robert Half

I've given you some key insights throughout this document. Among the key 9 skills I believe every key account manager and customer serving professional needs to work on, asking questions are in my top three.

It has not been given that much attention, but it's fast becoming recognised by the Harvard Business Review. If practised daily, you will quickly realise the power of this skill and the opportunities it can create for better sales and relationship results.

Try asking one new question a day based on the outcome, goal or truth you want to discover.

Want to know about the other 8 skills to master to become an irreplaceable adviser? Go to <http://www.jermainedwards.com/>.

I look forward to connecting and getting to know you.

All success,

Jermaine Edwards