

## **Pre-qualifying – Lead Mastery**

Two points in the sales process where most salespeople fail are: 1) pre-qualifying or lead mastery, and 2) handling objections. Successful salespeople are often high influencers. Since they are extremely optimistic, influencers tend to overrate their clients. They don't ask enough of the right questions initially, and spend too much time on the wrong product or with an unmotivated buyer who will ultimately waste their time and energy.

Successful salespeople understand the value of time. They know the key to expanding their business starts with effective pre-qualifying and having an effective lead follow up process. The first thing you must do is identify who your A leads are and then have a follow up system for the B and C leads. Salespeople often spend too much time with B and C leads and not enough time with A leads. Let's begin by describing each type of lead.

**A-Lead** – Superior lead. Prospect has high motivation and ability. They will buy (or sell) very soon. This depends on the selling cycle, but they will usually buy (sell) within 7 days (or possibly within 30 days). Most time, energy and focus should be placed on this client.

**B-Lead** – High quality lead. After proper pre-qualifying (he/she) is determined to have the ability, but may not be quite ready. Salesperson cannot speed up the buying process. (This can also be reversed where readiness is there but ability is delayed.) There are at least seven or more days before a purchase decision will be made. Make sure adequate information and value is given in advance to keep client from going elsewhere while working within their time frame. For a prospect whose ability is tied to a pay date, time it exactly at or shortly before that date.

**C-Lead** – Some interest in your product. Ability and interest after pre-qualifying determines follow up in 30 – 60 days. Provide them with just enough information, and schedule a follow up about 15 days sooner than they request.

**D-Lead** – Not a prospect due to lack of interest, desire and/or ability. Should be 1) data based permanently, 2) placed on a mail-only list or 3) followed up in six or more months for a one-time check.

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Once you have determined the status of your lead, it is important that you assign the appropriate follow up and color code (see Database/Lead Management). Even if you have no A Leads to work, resist the temptation to spend time with the B Leads. Continue to prospect or increase your prospecting until more A Leads are identified.

### **Ask the Right Questions**

In order to determine the interest, desire and motivation of a lead, you must ask a series of probing questions. It is better to work hard at qualifying and sell easy than the other way around. Don't be surprised if you end up asking at least 20 questions to get the information you need to provide the best solution to their problems. Ask about:

- **The Individual or Company**
- **The Need or Pain** (spend most time here)
- **The Interest** in your products and services
- **The Motivation or Desire** to meet the need and relieve the pain
- **The Ability** to meet the need and relieve the pain

#### **1. The Individual/Company-Get to Know Your Prospect**

No matter what your product or service, it is crucial that you get to know your prospect. Begin the pre-qualifying process by showing genuine interest in them so you can serve them better. This is when the rapport building process is launched and the trust factor takes root.

If the prospect senses you are concerned about finding the best solution for their problem, they will be more willing to give you all the information you need to commence a business relationship. You are actually interviewing your prospect to see whether you want to invest your time, effort and energy helping them. Spend more time here so you won't waste valuable time later.

## **Pre-qualifying – Lead Mastery *cont'd***

Ask specific questions to get the necessary information related to the product or service you are offering. Begin by asking easy questions first, and then work your way around to the more personal, sensitive ones. Whether you are serving a company or individual, prospects are most interested in talking about themselves.

If your prospect is an **individual**, you may want to find out their marital status, family size, occupation, length of employment at their current position, where they live, whether they rent or own, types of vehicles they drive, ages of their children, interests, hobbies, vacation places, income and outstanding debt.

If your prospect is a **business**, find out how long they have been in operation, their most profitable year, how many people they employ, what products or services they offer, their position in the market place, their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and toughest competition or threats.

It is paramount that you identify the decision-makers and the decision-making process. The key decision-makers **must** be present for your presentation.

Ask your prospect, “What is most important to you?” followed by “What about \_\_\_\_\_ is most important to you?”

Ask open-ended questions and note their responses. Listen to the answers and respond to them. Practice active listening by repeating back to the prospect what you heard to gain validation or correct any misunderstanding. These early questions will identify their need and ability to perform, and will help you transition into the most crucial portion of your pre-qualifying process: **The Needs Assessment**.

### **2. Needs Assessment: Discovering Your Prospect’s Needs, Pains and Problems.**

Every prospect you face has a problem. It is your job to help your prospect discover them. Once you have warmed up your client and begun to develop rapport and trust, it’s time to do a health check. Think of yourself as a doctor, and your patient has come to you with symptoms that you need to diagnosis and treat. The doctor will begin by asking a series of questions, then check vital signs, perform tests and render a diagnosis. What you are looking for are needs, pains and problems. Don’t be afraid to probe and

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ask in-depth questions that will expose their pain. Ask, “What are your three greatest needs?” Then ask, “What is your greatest need of all?” Don’t be surprised when they give you the information you need.

### **3. The Interest in Your Products and Services**

You must determine 1) how your prospects heard of you, 2) why your products and services interest them, 3) what kind of help they are seeking, and 4) whether they have found it. Find the drawing card that attracted your prospect to you and what you offer. Position that benefit often and tie them emotionally to it. This may also become the main Differentiator you use when comparing yourself to the competition.

### **4. Motivation – or Desire (To Fix the Need or Pain)**

Once you have done your job exposing their need, you must create the urgency to fix, repair or alleviate the pain. Determine how quickly they want to find a solution to their problem. They may exhibit no sense of urgency. If so, decide whether you can 1) legitimately show them how critical it is that they find a solution and what that solution is (thereby converting them to an A Lead), or 2) determine their timeline and appropriately categorize them as a B, C or D lead.

Keep a good balance between being persistent and persuasive when creating urgency. Don’t waste your time getting the lead to tell you what you want to hear, only to have them back down later. (Refer to Behavior Style Selling).

### **5. Ability to solve the problem and fix the need.**

Financial ability is absolutely necessary for your prospects to engage in business with you. They must also demonstrate three crucial qualifications:

**1) Interest**

**2) Desire**

**3) Ability**

It is your job to ask the following key questions to determine whether they have the **BIG 3**. Is the money set aside or budgeted? Do they have the credit rating or available credit? Do they have access to funds elsewhere? Can they reallocate funds if necessary? Will the money be available at a later date? If so, what

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is that date, and why do they have to wait till then to buy? If a way were provided to bridge the time gap, would they move forward sooner rather than later? If the money initially isn't there, it is your job to help them find it or appropriately categorize them as a B, C or D lead.

### **Sample Questions**

The following are examples of questions to ask to get acquainted with your prospect and determine their readiness, willingness and desire to do business with you. Most of these questions should be applicable to your situation, or help trigger the questions you need to ask.

### **Getting to Know Your Prospect**

#### **Individuals**

In order to align your needs to our products and services, I would like to ask a few questions to get more acquainted. Is that okay with you?

- 1) How long have you been in the area?
- 2) How long have you lived in your home?
- 3) Where do you work?
- 4) How long have you been employed there?
- 5) What is your occupation?
- 6) Do you have any children?
- 7) If so, how many do you have, and what are their ages?
- 8) What are your interests?
- 9) Where do you like to vacation?

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- 10) What process do you go through to make your decisions?
- 11) Who would you say is the key decision-maker, you or your spouse? Or do you make decisions together?
- 12) What is most important to you?
- 13) What about \_\_\_\_\_ is most important to you?

## **Company or Business**

In order to align your needs with our products and services, I would like to ask a few questions to get more acquainted. Is that okay with you?

- 1) How long have you worked at \_\_\_\_\_?
- 2) What is your position or title?
- 3) How long has your company been in business?
- 4) How many employees does your company have?
- 5) Is this year going to be your best year ever?
- 6) If not, which year was best and why?
- 7) What is the decision process your company goes through for a product like ours?
- 8) Who are the key decision-makers with whom I will need to speak?
- 9) What is most important to you?
- 10) What about \_\_\_\_\_ is most important to you?

**Needs Assessment**

- 1) How were you hoping our company would help you?
- 2) Did you find it? Did we meet or exceed your expectations?
- 3) Most of our clients come to us looking for help with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_. Are those your greatest needs as well, or do you need help with anything else?
- 4) What would you say are your greatest needs right now?
- 5) If you could solve one challenge that would have the greatest impact on you, what would that one thing be?
- 6) What three main challenges or needs could I solve for you that would be of greatest benefit or value?
- 7) Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever happened to you?
- 8) Have you ever experienced \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?

**Interest in your Products and Services**

- 1) How did you happen to hear about us?
- 2) What about our \_\_\_\_\_ most interests you?
- 3) From what you know about our (product/service), what do you like most over our competitors?
- 4) How were you hoping our company would help you?
- 5) Did you find it? Did we meet or exceed your expectations?
- 6) Of everything we offer that would benefit you, which would benefit you most?
- 7) What do you appreciate about us?

**Motivation – Desire**

- 1) When are you planning to make your decision?
- 2) What is your timeline for completing your decision process?
- 3) If I could show you how to solve \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, would you be willing to commit today?
- 4) How soon did you want to (own/lease/rent/purchase) your new \_\_\_\_\_?
- 5) If I could find a product that would solve all of your problems and meet all of your requirements, would you be in a position to make a decision today?
- 6) When do you envision yourself being in your new \_\_\_\_\_?
- 7) If I could solve all of your problems now, is there any reason we couldn't get together sooner than later?
- 8) I can certainly call you in (1 month/6 months, etc). May I ask why waiting till \_\_\_\_\_ is better for you than moving forward now?
- 9) I can certainly call you in (x amount of time). May I ask what is happening at that time that will make your decision process easier than now?
- 10) With the challenge(s) you have, wouldn't it make sense to solve them sooner rather than later, assuming everything else is favorable for you? Can you afford to wait?
- 11) If I show you how to start now and pay later, would that help you start sooner rather than later?

**Ability**

- 1) What have you budgeted for this transaction?

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- 2) How were you planning to take ownership of the (product/service)?
- 3) What was the amount you wanted to stay within?
- 4) Is there an initial amount that you have you set aside for this?
- 5) Have you seen a lender or your bank? What did they say?
- 6) Based on the amount of the (product/service) you are wanting, the range is around\_\_\_\_\_. If we determined that was the best fit for you, and you were ready to own it, would you finance it, or do you prefer cash?
- 7) The ballpark amount for what you are looking for is approximately\_\_\_\_\_? Is that about the range you were looking to invest in?
- 8) So, if we found the right fit for you, you could invest in yourself today - is that correct?
- 9) If we could help you find the means to make it easier to own\_\_\_\_\_, and keep it with in your budget, would you be ready to move forward today?
- 10) If we could show you how to start now with no initial amount, would that be of benefit to you?

## **Creating Your Pre-Qualifying Questions**

(Make sure the questions you ask address **getting to know your prospect, needs assessment, interest in your products/services, motivation and ability**. Put the questions in the order you would ask them. Start with getting to know your prospect, then proceed with the other categories in the same order. A sample question would be “Is that the approximate range you were planning to invest in?” This addresses the prospect’s ability and whether they would be buying now or later.

**Pre-qualifying – Lead Mastery *cont'd***

**Question**

**Addresses**

**Asking now? (Y/N)**

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**Question**

**Addresses**

**Asking now? (Y/N)**

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