

The Defining Mark

Barrier Free Business Development Ideas

This issue: Questions are the Answer - Needs Analysis

The quality of information that you receive from your clients and prospects is in direct proportion to the quality of the questions that you ask.

Another way to consider this could be - "The long term success of your company, regardless of your product or service, is directly based on your ability to identify and fill needs within your target market." It is the presence of pain, some form of need which you can fill, which is the greatest determining factor between a suspect and a prospect.

The most effective way, possibly the only way, to identify a prospect's true needs is to ask questions - lots of them. (Don't forget to listen to the answers.)

Your questions will come in two basic forms: open-ended and closed. Each has its uses at different times. If you wish to encourage someone to speak about a situation, (open-ended), the question would likely be different than one used to confirm a date, time or other detail, (closed).

During the process of needs analysis, (read: asking questions & listening to answers), you will find that a prospect's needs can be plotted along two axes:

1. Degree of Need (validity or urgency)
2. Awareness of Need (knowledge, recognition, acknowledgement)

Oddly enough, it is not those needs that are both high in degree and awareness that are your issue. These are already in the forefront to the point that you can simply work with your prospect through their search for fulfillment.

It is those needs that are valid, yet unknown that are your true mission. When you come along side an organization; help them identify previously unknown areas of need; and implement solutions which can prevent the problem - you become not only a valuable resource, you have earned the right to be considered a trusted agent.

Once any genuine needs have been identified, your questioning skills will also be required to identify purchasing authority; any potential competition; time frames; budgets and a host of other details necessary to ensure a smooth purchasing experience for your prospects. (Remember, it isn't about you selling. It is about your prospects and clients buying.)

In order to ensure a thorough needs analysis, remember the words of the legendary Claude Levi-Strauss, "The wise man doesn't give the right answers, he poses the right questions."



Jim Carty, CSP

Before beginning a Hunt, it is wise to ask someone what you are looking for before you begin looking for it.

- Pooh's Little Instruction Book, inspired by A. A. Milne

Action Plan:

- Develop a list of questions for use during needs analysis
- Identify which needs your products address and/or prevent
- Needs Analysis is a time to "ask" not a time to "tell"
- Remember, AltiMark is available to advise & assist with any or all of these steps.