

## THE SECRET WEAPON BEHIND BETTER EXECUTIVE CONVERSATIONS

To have productive conversations with executives, you must gather the right information and be ready to speak their language. The first step is to use the many available resources and tools to collect information and data. Your investigation will be the foundation that allows you to predict and ultimately prepare.

### STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE CONVERSATION

Executive Speak™  
Process overview



### THE ULTIMATE LIST OF RESEARCH SOURCES

Bookmark these links!



FOR BEST RESULTS,  
OPEN THIS TOOL WITH  
ACROBAT READER  
*Download the Reader here*



## STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE CONVERSATION

### 1. INVESTIGATE

Answer the questions in this  
360° Profile Builder™

To have effective conversations with executives,  
you must gather the right information and be  
ready to speak their language.

The first step is to use the many available  
resources and tools to collect information  
and data.

Your investigation will be the  
foundation that allows you to  
predict and, ultimately, prepares  
you for your next call.

### 3. PREPARE

Write Open, Probe and Confirm  
Questions for the Pre-Call  
ValuePrompter®, based on your  
research and predictions.

You've made the investment to investigate  
your target company and industry. You've  
made intelligent predictions about key people,  
business issues, and problems.

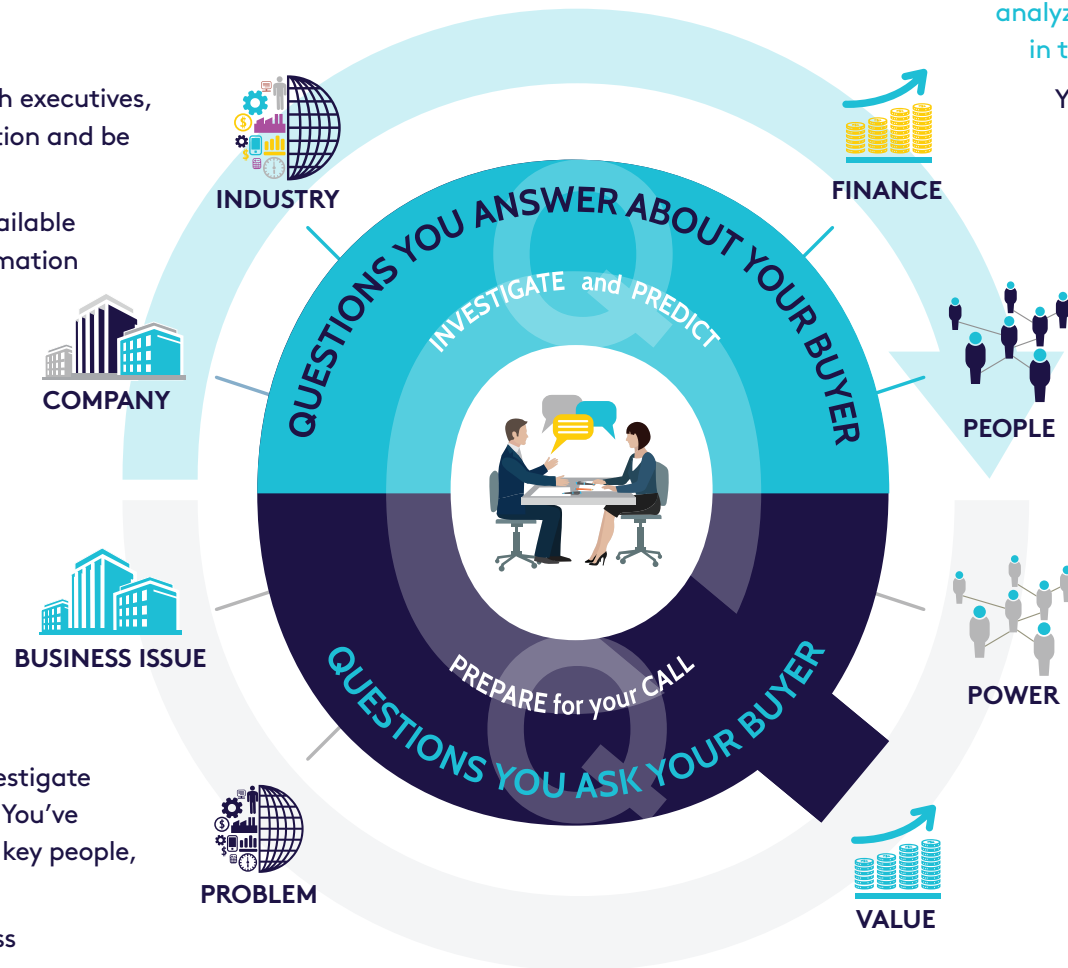
Now you're positioned for a business  
conversation.

### 2. PREDICT

Identify potential issues, problems,  
capabilities, value and key people by  
analyzing the answers to the questions  
in the 360° Profile Builder™

Your ability to connect with the key  
executives at your buyer's company  
is predicated on your ability to  
predict what their business  
issues and problems are.

Of course, once you're IN the  
meeting, you'll want to listen  
and calibrate what you already  
know with what they tell you.



## RESEARCH SOURCES (last updated 03/2019)

### When you have only a few minutes

1. Go to [Hoovers.com](https://www.hoovers.com) and look up your buyer's organization
2. Read the Letter from the CEO. It's usually on the inside front cover of their annual report.
3. Listen to the Q&A section of their most recent earnings call.

### Company Research

Look for your buyer's company website on your favorite search engine. Check the About Us section for Mission and Values statements. Look here for company size, location, and history.

### Industry Research

Start with Hoovers or Dun & Bradstreet, then expand with your favorite search engine. Look for trade organizations or associations, and remember to click the News tab for recent information.

### Financial Research

Most public companies are required to have a section of their websites for investor relations where you can view their annual reports and listen to their earnings calls with investors. Look for income state-ments, balance sheets and cash flow statements.

### People Research

Google the key people from the organization and find any mentions of them in the News tab. Aside from that, corporate blogs are usually a treasure trove of information. Don't forget to check their posts on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

### Links

- [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)
- [crunchbase.com](https://www.crunchbase.com)
- [dnb.com](https://www.dnb.com)
- [www.esa.doc.gov](https://www.esa.doc.gov)  
(Economics & Statistics Admin)
- [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)
- [hoovers.com](https://www.hoovers.com)
- [knowthis.com](https://www.knowthis.com)
- [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)
- [mergentmddi.com](https://www.mergentmddi.com)
- [themuse.com](https://www.themuse.com)
- [thomasnet.com](https://www.thomasnet.com)
- [twitter.com](https://www.twitter.com)
- [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov)
- [marketresearch.com](https://www.marketresearch.com)
- [fortune.com/fortune500](https://fortune.com/fortune500)

*These links are suggestions to get you started in your research. They are by no means a comprehensive list of all possible industry or research links.*

### Publications

- *American Demographics*
- *Barron's Magazine*
- *Business Week*
- *Financial Times*
- *Forbes*
- *Fortune*
- *MSN Money*
- *USA Today*
- *Wall Street Journal*

### Local Library Reference (US only)

- Encyclopedia of Associations
- US Industry & Trade Outlook
- US Industrial Outlook
- Standard & Poors Industry Surveys
- Annual Survey of Manufacturers
- Industry Norms and Key Business Ratios
- Almanac of Business and Industrial Financial Ratios
- Annual Statement Studies





## PROFILE INFORMATION

You can complete a profile for any or all of your existing or prospective client organizations.

Keep this document as a blank template, and “Save As” for each profile you wish to create. Don’t forget to save often!

### MASTER 360° PROFILE

Create a “Master” profile for each company, as fully completed as possible. Update the “Last Updated” date on this page whenever you update information in the profile.

Once you have a complete Master for your buyer’s company, create a “Save As” of it for each person on your customer’s team. It is likely that each will have information that changes, depending on their role and responsibilities.

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

Company Name:

Division/Business Unit:

Notes:

Last Updated:

### ABOUT THE PROFILE PERSON (Optional)

Name:

Title:

Notes:

Clicking RESET will erase ALL form fields in the entire profile.  
This action cannot be undone!



## QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BUYER (CLICK EACH TO GO TO THAT QUESTION PAGE)

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

Describe the company's business.

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

What are their products and services?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

How do they go to market?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

Who are their customers?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FINANCIALS

How have their revenues changed over the past few years?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FINANCIALS

How have their profit margins changed over the past few years?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FINANCIALS

How has their net income changed over the past few years?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

Describe their movement in the market.

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

Who is in management and how are they organized?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

Who is your ideal contact in the company?

### ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

What part of the business do they manage or own?



### ABOUT THE COMPANY

## Describe the company's business

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:



Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

## What are their products or services?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:



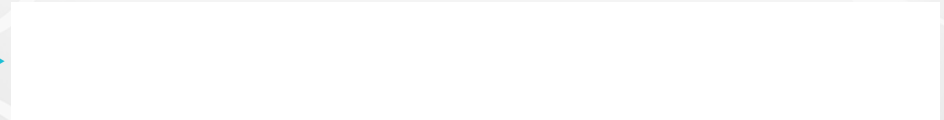
ABOUT THE COMPANY

## How do they go to market? (direct, channel, etc.)

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

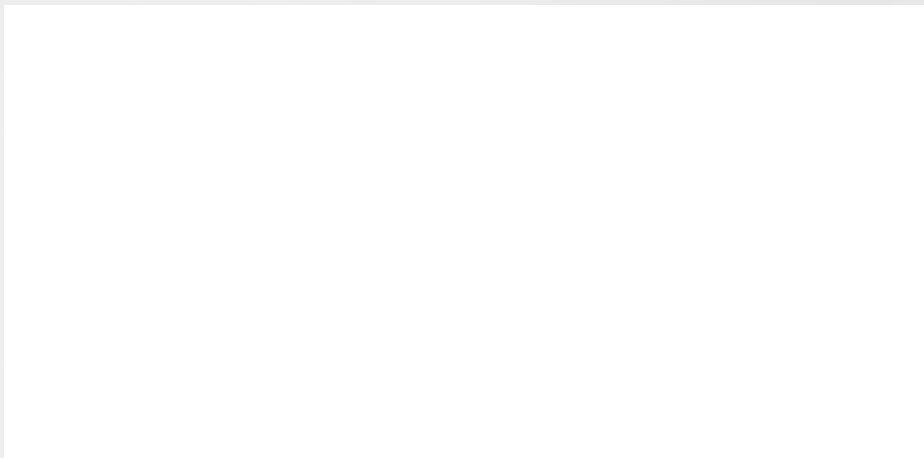


Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

## Who are their customers?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:



## ABOUT THE COMPANY

### Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

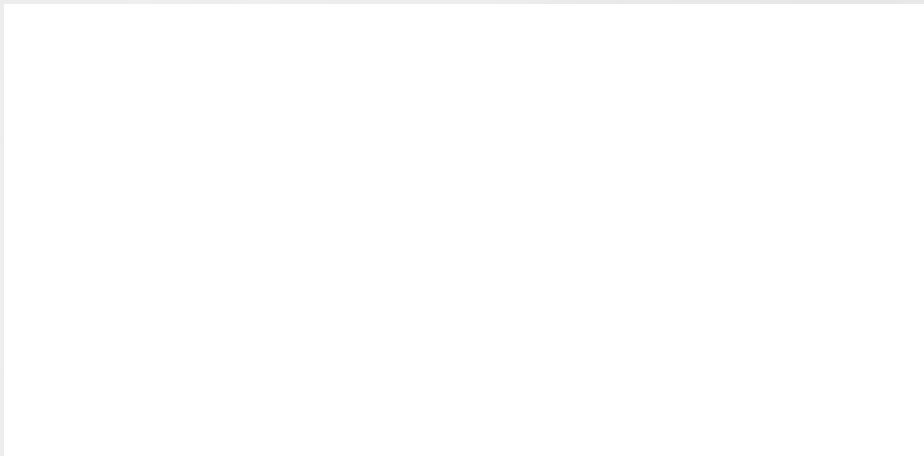


Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.

## ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

### Describe their movement in the market (up, down, static).

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:





ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

## Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

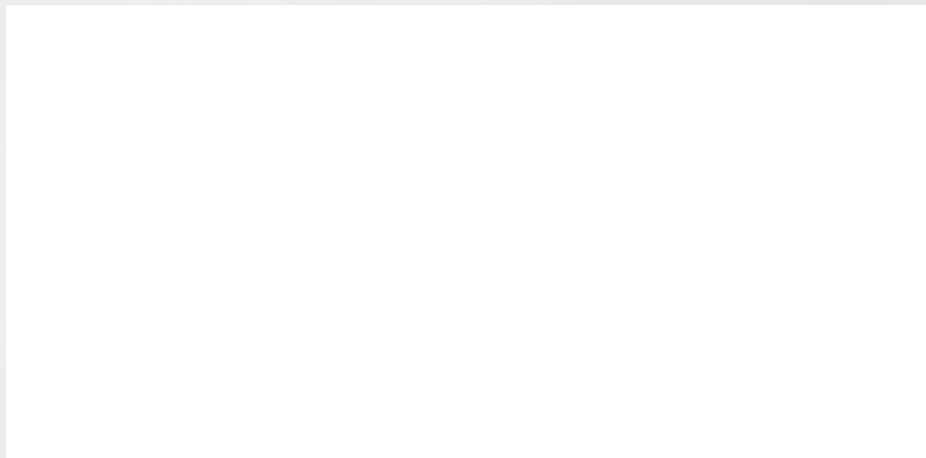


Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.

ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

## Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:



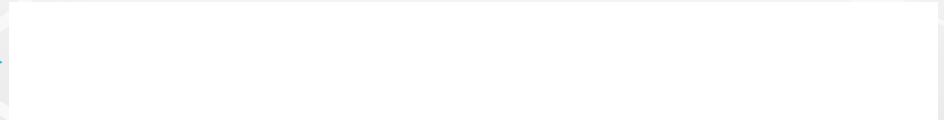
ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

## Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

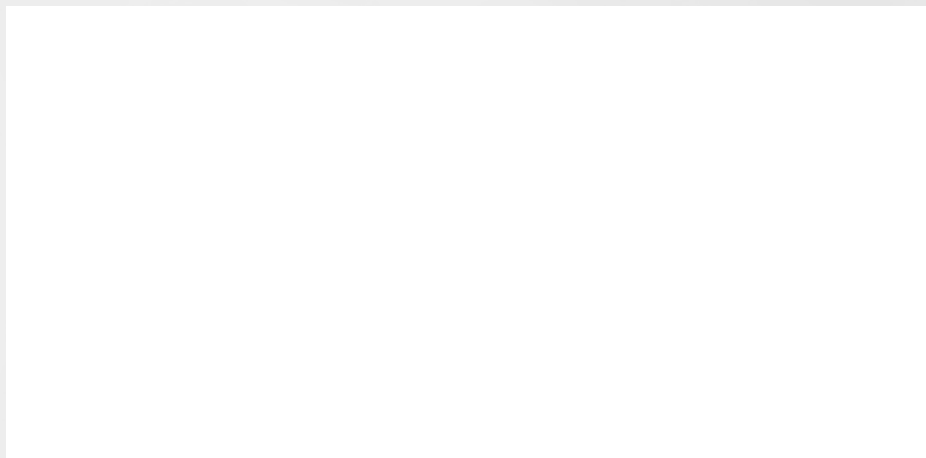


Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.


ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

## Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:



## ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FINANCIALS

# How have their revenues changed over the past few years?

Examine your buyer's Income Statements for the current year, past year and year before that.

REVENUE (in thousands)

CURRENT YEAR

PAST YEAR

TWO YEARS AGO





Then summarize whether revenue has declined, grown or stayed the same.

## ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FINANCIALS

# How have their profit margins changed over the past few years?

Examine your buyer's Income Statements and calculate. Gross Profit Margin = (Gross Profit/Total Revenue) x 100. Net Profit Margin = Net Income/Net Sales (revenue). Use the equation that you prefer.

GROSS PROFIT MARGIN:  
$$\frac{\text{GROSS PROFIT}}{\text{TOTAL REVENUE}} \times 100$$

CURRENT YEAR

%

PAST YEAR

%

TWO YEARS AGO

%





Then summarize whether profit margins have declined, grown or stayed the same.

NET PROFIT MARGIN:  
$$\frac{\text{NET INCOME}}{\text{NET SALES (Revenue)}}$$



## ABOUT THE COMPANY'S INDUSTRY

# How has their net income changed over the past few years?

Examine your buyer's Income Statements. Subtract operating income and expenses from gross profit to get net income, then divide by revenue.

	CURRENT YEAR	PAST YEAR	TWO YEARS AGO
$\frac{\text{NET INCOME}}{\text{REVENUE}} \times 100$ <p>(in thousands)</p>	<div></div> <p>%</p>	<div></div> <p>%</p>	<div></div> <p>%</p>

Then summarize whether net income has declined, grown or stayed the same.

## ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

# Who is in management and how are they organized?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.

Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.



ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

## Who is your ideal contact in the company?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:

Go to PROFILE on page 14 to see all of your summaries on one page.

ABOUT THE COMPANY'S KEY PEOPLE

## What part of the business do they manage or own?

TAKE NOTES: Copy and paste or type your answers here.



Then summarize your research to 256 characters or less here:





HOME



INVESTIGATE



PROFILE



PREDICT



PREPARE



PROMPTER®

COMPANY NAME:

PROFILE PERSON:

LAST UPDATED:

Describe the company's business.

What are their products and services?

How do they go to market?

Who are their customers?

Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

How have their revenues changed over the past few years?

How have their profit margins changed over the past few years?

How has their net income changed over the past few years?

Describe their movement in the market.

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?

Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?

Who is in management and how are they organized?

Who is your ideal contact in the company?

What part of the business do they manage or own?





HOME



INVESTIGATE



PROFILE



PREDICT



PREPARE



VALUE PROMPTER®

# PREDICT



### BUSINESS ISSUE

A Business Issue is a time-bound, measurable metric that an individual needs to address or resolve to achieve an organization's Business Objective, or what an organization needs to accomplish to maintain or grow their business.

**PROBLEM** Difficulties that prevent buyers from being able to address satisfactorily or resolve their business issues.

**SOLUTION** Your buyer's view or opinion of the capabilities that will enable them to solve their Problems and resolve their Business Issues.

**VALUE** The buyer's perception of the impact of a solution that resolves their business issue, from both a financial and personal perspective.

**POWER** The person, or people, in your buyer's organization who has authority to authorize or prevent a purchase decision.

**PLAN** A written communication that outlines a set of activities required for the buyer to realize results of doing business with you.





## Predict your buyer's business issue(s)

What does your buyer need to address and resolve to achieve their Business Objectives?

### YOUR RESEARCH SUMMARIES:

How have their revenues changed over the past few years?

Describe their movement in the market.

How have their profit margins changed over the past few years?

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

How has their net income changed over the past few years?

Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?





## Predict your buyer's problem(s)

What might be difficulties that prevent your buyer from being able to address satisfactorily or resolve their business issues?

### YOUR RESEARCH SUMMARIES:

Describe the company's business.

What are their products and services?

How do they go to market?

Who are their customers?

Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?

Describe their movement in the market.

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?



## Predict how the capabilities of your solutions help your buyer

What capabilities do your solutions have that may solve your buyer's business issues or problems?

### YOUR RESEARCH SUMMARIES:

Describe the company's business.

Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?

Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?





## Predict your buyer's business and personal value

What do you think your buyer's perception of the impact of your solution on their business might be?

### YOUR RESEARCH SUMMARIES:

How have their revenues changed over the past few years?

How have their profit margins changed over the past few years?

How has their net income changed over the past few years?

Any drivers or trends about them in the press?

Describe their movement in the market.

Any recent changes in the industry or for your buyer?

Any notable mergers or acquisitions?

Any notable challenges or problems in their industry?

Any notable opportunities or threats in their industry?





## Predict your buyer's key people

Who do you think has the authority to sign off on a project and to allocate money to implement it?

### YOUR RESEARCH SUMMARIES:

Who is in management and how are they organized?

Who is your ideal contact in the company?

What part of the business do they manage or own?





HOME



INVESTIGATE



PROFILE



PREDICT



PREPARE



PROMPTER®

## Prepare open, probe and anxiety questions for your call

### 1. OPEN QUESTIONS

Select open questions for each section of the ValuePrompter®

Open Questions are designed to bring to the surface your buyer's view of their current situation and encourage them to talk more. They are objective, non-leading, and usually start with "what," "why," or "how." They demonstrate that you're interested.

### 2. PROBE QUESTIONS

Select probe questions for each section of the ValuePrompter®

Probe Questions expand the conversation to include information the buyer wouldn't have shared otherwise, or to gain a deeper understanding of information revealed by Open questions. They are typically a "yes" or "no" question.

### 3. ANXIETY QUESTIONS

Select anxiety questions for the ValuePrompter®

Anxiety Questions cause a Buyer to experience the consequences of not having your Solution. They create a sense of urgency when none exists. Anxiety Questions are provocative in nature. They challenge a Buyer's way of thinking.





## Prepare questions related to your buyer's business issue

What does your buyer need to address and resolve to achieve their Business Objectives?

### Draft some Open Questions

### Draft some Probe Questions

### Draft some Anxiety Questions

### Example Open Question

- What is your first business priority?

### Example Probe Question

- Are your costs under control?

### Example Anxiety Questions

- Are you concerned about X?
- Are you confident that XYZ will happen?
- Is there a risk if XYZ happens?
- What is the implication of failure if XYZ happens?





## Prepare questions related to your buyer's problems

What might be difficulties that prevent your buyer from being able to address satisfactorily or resolve their business issues?

### Draft some Open Questions

### Example Open Question

- What are some of your difficulties?

### Draft some Probe Questions

### Example Probe Question

- Is it because of X?





## Prepare questions related to your solution capabilities

What capabilities do your solutions have that may solve your buyer's business issues or problems?

### Draft some Open Questions

### Draft some Probe Questions

### Example Open Question

- What do you think is needed to address X?

### Example Probe Question

- Have you considered the capability of X?







## Prepare questions related to your buyer's value

What do you think your buyer's perception of the impact of your solution on their business might be?

### Draft some Open Questions

### Draft some Probe Questions

### Example Open Question

- How would you quantify the impact of these capabilities?

### Example Probe Question

- Can you quantify the value of solving Problem X?





## Prepare questions related to your buyer's key people

Who do you think has the authority to sign off on a project and to allocate money to implement it?

### Draft some Open Questions

### Draft some Probe Questions

### Example Open Question

- What is your decision-making process?

### Example Probe Question

- When you make the decision, will X be included?



ValuePrompter®

BUSINESS ISSUE:  
ANXIETY QUESTION:

©1993-2020 ValueSelling Associates, Inc. All rights reserved.

PROBLEM

OPEN

PROBE

CONFIRM

SOLUTION

OPEN

PROBE

CONFIRM

VALUE

OPEN

PROBE

CONFIRM

POWER

PLAN

OPEN

PROBE

CONFIRM





HOME



INVESTIGATE



PROFILE



PREDICT



PREPARE



PROMPTER®

## CONGRATULATIONS!

You've successfully made it through all three stages of preparing for a call with your buyer: Investigate, Predict, and Prepare. Be sure to save your work and use this tool for your future calls with executives.



Keep it simple. Drive results.

