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## Ask Questions



**Ben Cornett the King of questions with me circa 2013**

When I was a young guy in sales, I wanted to talk and tell about what I was selling, instead of weaving questions into interactive conversation with my prospect. I think many young sales people think it's a one way street of telling their story then maybe asking for an order. There was a study done that observed conversations and then asked each person how well they thought the conversation went. They found that the person who talked more overwhelming thought the conversation went well.

Knowing this, I started asking a ton of good question on sales calls. I wanted to talk less and HAVE THEM talk more. I did it in a way that didn't feel like an interrogation, but instead tried to find out how my products could solve their problems. Another wonderful benefit of asking questions is you learn things. If you walk out of a meeting that was dominated by you talking, the other person now has all of their knowledge and they now know a lot of what you know. What did you walk out with? You walked out with 100% of what you know and a sliver of what they know. Who gained? Act that way for a year and you will be no better off than when you started the year before. If you are there talking with someone really learn, really understand. When you don't, you are cheating on building and improving your most valuable asset; yourself! Again the old saying, "God gave you two ears and one mouth, use them in the proper ratio".

There are some basic views of questions; here comes the Algebra or Calculus of questions! This is a little tricky to understand and when I first heard it from my boss Ben Cornett back in 1989, I didn't really understand how to properly implement it. Ben would say never ask a question you don't already know the answer to. I was a young sales guy who didn't know much, and I had to figure out how to ask a question that I already knew the answer to? On top of that, I have to ask a whole sales call worth of them? Oh my god....what? Let me try to explain.

Ben is a tremendous communicator and an amazing salesman. Ben is so good that you don't even realize what he's doing. People might just think he's a nice guy (which he is!). They don't understand the level of professionalism and years of

perfecting his craft that's involved in never asking a question you don't know the answer to. Here is an analogy to how great people, like Ben, sell. By asking questions, it would be like taking someone through the woods and they think together you both are discovering the path through the woods and exiting the other end all the while you think you made half the choices and I made half the decisions. Conversely, with Ben or other elite salespeople they already know exactly how to go through the woods. They know exactly how long it will take and they know where they will exit, but for the person going through the woods (or the customer) they think they are on an adventure with you. In the end, with a master salesman like Ben Cornett, the client will think they got there with you and most of the time they will think they led the way. In reality, through questions (that you already knew the answers to) you were leading them all the way.

If you could earn a doctorate in sales, the salesman that never asked a question that he didn't know the answer to would be Dr. Salesman. The great ones like Ben Cornett and Lance Dean have fine-tuned their communication through the years. They have perfected their craft so they could be called Doctors, most of them are also called multi-millionaires. In the Movie 40 Year Old Virgin, Steve Carrell's character was trying to meet girls. His buddy Cal gave him the advice to just ask questions to girls. Worked like a charm on the first girl, total disaster on the next one. I bring that up because it takes time to learn how to weave questions in a sales process.

My suggestion is to listen to some of the most successful sales people you know and keep score of how many and how often they ask questions. You will recognize the patterns and you will see that the prospect feels more involved when you are asking them questions. If you talk after the sales call you find that the professional salesman knew exactly what he was doing by asking those questions. He knew the possible answers and knew the next question. I use the word "professional" salesman because anything can be used for good or bad.

A gun can protect and save, but it can murder in the wrong hands. A skilled salesman armed with questions can do both good and evil. There a huge difference between a professional salesman and a con man, just as a policeman and a murderer. Questions should be spelled Question\$, because there's definitely money in them when asked correctly!