

The 15-Minute Guide To 'Why' Conversations

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When you're talking with a customer or a prospect, your goal is to uncover the *pains* and *problems* they're facing as a business.

I recommend considering this format:

- **Listen** - What is the project, and what does the client think should be done? (This is the step all of your competitors will also do.)
- **Identify the Trigger** - What sparked the creation of this project? Did an event, or a culmination of events, bring this project to life?
- **Highlight the Problem** - What's the underlying issue that relates to whatever sparked this project?
- **How Painful is the Problem?** - What effect does this problem have on the business? We want to make it known here that we only want to work on projects where we can deliver a return on investment.
- **What's The Cost?** - What's the historical cost, either in opportunity or actual figures, that this problem has caused the company? Left unfixed, what long-term costs are associated with the problem?
- **How Should Tomorrow Look?** - If the problem was no longer an issue, what would tomorrow look like for their business?

Pains, Dreams, and Wants

Ideally, we're identifying the 'big picture' pains, dreams, and wants that the business owner we're talking with is experiencing.

Let's assume that it's three years from today and you and I are talking. You're really happy. My question is, what has happened in those three years to make you so happy?

Follow-Up Questions

Once you ask your initial question, you'll want to ask a follow-up question.

“Why”

This is my favorite. It allows you to dig deeper and learn more from the prospect.

Let's say you asked them “How can I help?” and they responded:

I, the business owner, have been handling it this whole time, and I want to focus my energy/expertise elsewhere in the company

Asking *why* lets us understand why they want to make this change. That helps us determine the outcome they're looking for and the problem they're experiencing.

The beautiful thing is that asking ‘why’ can mean *so many different things* and the direction the prospect takes that question in can be amazing. For this sample statement:

I, the business owner, have been handling it this whole time,

and I want to focus my energy/expertise elsewhere in the company

Let's look at all the things that asking "Why" could mean:

- "Why have you been handling it yourself this entire time?"
- "Why do you want to focus your energy elsewhere?"
- "Why do you want to focus your expertise elsewhere?"
- "Why now and not 6 months ago?"
- "Why in this way?"

All of which are excellent follow-up questions to ask on their own.

Additional Follow-Up Questions

- What obstacles are in the way?
- What opportunities do you see?
- Who needs to be involved?
- Why now?
- Why me?
- Have funds have been allocated?
- How can I help?

Types of Questions

There are six types of questions you can ask:

1. Questions for clarification:

- Why do you say that?
- How does this relate to our discussion?

2. Questions that probe assumptions:

- What could we assume instead?
- How can you verify/disapprove that?

3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence:

- What would be an example?
- What do you think causes to happen...? Why:?

4. Questions about Viewpoints and Perspectives:

- What would be an alternative?
- Would you explain why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits?
- What is a counterargument for...?

5. Questions that probe implications and consequences:

- What generalizations can you make?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How does...tie in with what we learned before?

6. Questions about the question:

- Why do you think I asked this question?
- What does...mean?
- How does...apply to your business?
- What does...mean?

Remember this in your conversation

First, guide them into interesting topics when they bring them up. Ask questions like “Can you tell me more about that?”

Second, never ask them to predict future behavior. It will never be accurate. Focus on understanding past behavior.

Third, ask them about what they’ve done in the past. The more specific you can get an answer, the more valuable. Always focus on more specific over in general.

Fourth, when they give you ideas for services, products, answers, or whatever else, make sure to ask them *context-specific* questions about their suggestion.

- Why this suggestion?
- What they were doing when this need arose?
- Why they were doing it?
- Why they need this service’s outcome?