

10 Powerful Questions for *Needs Discovery*

If you want to be successful in sales, it's important to know what your buyer needs. There's no use wasting your time if you're trying to sell a company on a solution they don't need or that won't be good for their business.

Asking powerful questions is a key part of the discovery process. The right questions allow you to uncover opportunities and craft a solution that's relevant and effective. Use the three types of questions for powerful needs discovery:

1. **Broad open-ended questions:** These get people to open up and start talking.
2. **Specific open-ended questions:** These uncover latent needs that buyers may not be aware of.
3. **Closed-ended questions:** These are great for diagnosis and uncovering needs that buyers may not yet perceive as a problem.

Here are 10 specific questions you can ask to uncover aspirations and afflictions:

1. **If, at the end of this meeting, you looked back and thought, "That was time well spent," what would we have covered?**

What better way to run a meeting than to make sure you cover exactly what matters to the buyer? Plus, this question gets to aspirations and afflictions for the meeting, which ensures you're not only focusing on pain points.

2. **Why isn't this particular technology/service/product/situation or issue working for you right now?**

Many buyers are willing to talk to sellers because something they're doing or using right now isn't working for them. It's important to know what you're up against.

3. **Many of our customers report problems with A, B, and C. How are these areas affecting you? What do you think about them?**

This is a great way to establish expertise and industry credibility. It also asks the buyer to think about their challenges in a different way or consider challenges they hadn't identified previously. The idea is to ask specific open-ended questions that show you know the area well.

4. **What's holding you back from reaching your revenue—or profit, or other—goals?**

Learning about obstacles early in the conversation is imperative. If the buyer believes an obstacle is insurmountable, it's up to you to show them why it's not and how to get past it.

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5. What goals and objectives do you have in general for your business? For this particular area?

Finding out about your buyer's hopes, goals, and aspirations allows you to focus on the positives during your conversations and uncover needs the buyer hadn't previously considered but should.

6. [Assuming the buyer set the meeting] Why did you ask me to talk with you today?

You may already know why the buyer set the meeting, but it doesn't hurt to revisit the question to make sure you're on the same page. It's also possible there have been developments since the meeting was set, so it's useful to see if there are any updates.

7. [Assuming you (the seller) set the meeting] As I mentioned earlier, I'd like to share a few ideas that have helped our clients succeed in the X, Y, and Z areas. Before we get going, by the time we're done with this meeting, what else might you like to cover?

It's possible the buyer had something else in mind when they accepted the meeting with you beyond what you proposed. This is a good way to check in before you start talking to ensure the meeting is as valuable as possible.

8. What's your sense of what needs to happen to improve that/make progress here/change that?

Knowing your buyer's perspective on the situation and how they think it can be addressed will give you an idea of things like company culture, how receptive they'll be to your ideas, and how to frame your solution, service, or product.

9. What kind of opportunities do you see for improvement in this area?

This is a great question to uncover both aspirations and afflictions. By getting the buyer to articulate the opportunities for improvement, they're likely to talk about both the problems they have in this area—the afflictions—and their vision for what it could be like—the aspirations.

10. What have you done in the past to address this issue or try to reach this goal?

As you're formulating your solution, you don't want to suggest something the buyer has already tried and failed. You either want to build on what they're doing or change it altogether, neither of which you can do without this question.

BONUS: 3 Open-Ended Sales Questions to Keep Buyers Talking

11. How so?

Understanding the buyer's perception of a situation will not only give you further insight into how to address it, but also a glimpse of the buyer's thought process.

12. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Whether you don't understand, want to know more, or think there's an opportunity in this area, digging a little deeper will give you the clarity you need.

13. Why?

Asking "why" a few more times can open the door for new insights as you get to the underlying cause of the problem. This allows you to create a better, more durable solution. Watch a video on the power of asking "why" [here](#).