

GENERATE INTEREST THROUGH INQUIRY

All truths are easy to understand once discovered. The point is to discover them.

Galileo Galilei



Interest is always related to what matters to your audience. If you want to get someone interested in what you have to say, forget what you want and work out what they want. Inquiring is when you adopt the approach of asking sales orientated questions to find out information. A question is a sentence, which is worded in a way that elicits a response. Prior to delving into the ways you can use questions it is important to understand how to structure and build your questions. The first distinction to make is that of open or closed. Closed questions are based on the either / or polarity. Closed questions begin with:

- Which
- Did
- Will
- Can
- Have

When you ask a closed question, the individual can answer with either a yes or a no, or a fact. They can be useful when seeking a simple confirmation however to deepen the inquiry, they are limited. So for example a closed question might be 'Do you have any questions you want to ask about me this project before we move on to the next one?' The person can then answer yes or no and you get the information you require to either progress forward or fill in any missing blanks they have. Because they don't deepen the dialogue, it is suggested you are mindful to use closed questions only when appropriate.

Open questions have a much broader scope of use. They begin with:

- What
- Who
- When
- Where
- How
- Why

When the question starts with ... what will you find out?

What..

Where..

When..

How..

Why..

Who..

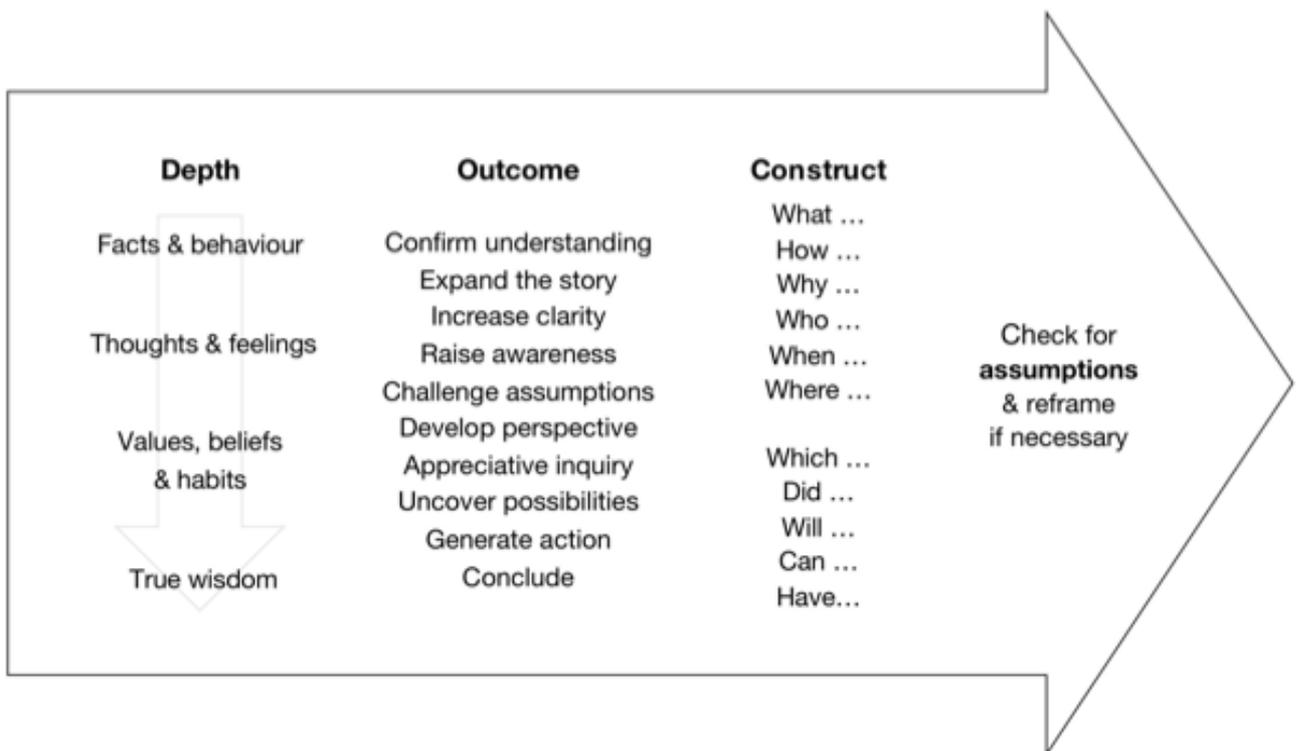
CONSTRUCT POWERFUL QUESTIONS

The wise question, is one half the answer.

Sir Francis Bacon



The process illustrated below, will teach you how to construct great questions for all types of sales situations. There are four different elements to the process, which once learned will enable you to ask questions, that take the needs inquiry to a deeper level.



Depth

The first consideration is what you are selling and how deep the conversation needs to dig in order to uncover the customer pain points and needs. Sometimes basic facts will be sufficient, and in other cases, their needs will be more closely linked with their personal values and beliefs, so requires more probing.

Outcome

The next aspect to consider is the outcome of the question. All questions will invite the buyer to think about the topic being discussed and then reply in a particular way. The skilful sales person uses questions in such a way as to guide the buyer to uncover their own truth and find their own solutions. There are many different outcomes which questions can achieve, such as:

- Expand the context
- Increase clarity
- Raise their awareness
- Challenge their assumptions
- Uncover new possibilities
- Generate them to take action
- Take responsibility
- Close the sale

Construction

On the previous pages you read about the difference between open and closed questions. Both have their uses and by consciously observing the open and closed questions you use, you'll quickly start to learn when to use each type. With a clearly defined outcome that you want the question to achieve, you can then construct the question. There are several other important things to consider in relation to the art of constructing questions.

Remember to use language, which the other person understands. By paying attention to the language they use, you can easily use the same type of words they do. This is the best way to avoid any loss of meaning that occurs when you're using your own choice of words. So if the person frequently uses the adjective 'fabulous' in their speech, you might ask a question like 'what would a fabulous result on that project, look like for you?'

Aim to make your questions possibility orientated, rather than problem orientated. '*How can you avoid the pain?*' asks them to think about what they don't want. Whereas '*How can you start to improve the situation?*' asks them to think of new solutions.

Simplicity is also important. When a question has too much complexity, the human mind will start to pull apart the question and as such acts as a barrier to deeper inquiry.

Assumptions

Because of the nature of language, nearly all questions have assumptions embedded into them, whether they are explicit or implicit. Assumptions can sometimes limit the individual deepening their inquiry and uncovering new possibilities. Let's take a look at a simple rapport building question.

'How did you like the rugby game at the weekend?'

The embedded assumption is that the person first of all likes rugby and secondly, actually watched it. If the person was not a rugby fan, then this question could quickly break the rapport.

This question can be reframed to remove the assumption by asking:

"What's your favourite sport?"

Often questions contain unconscious beliefs, so the final step in the line of inquiry process is to become aware of embedded assumptions, then reframe if necessary.

Simply ask yourself

- What assumptions or beliefs am I holding which are colouring this question?
- What other questions could I ask if I changed this assumption / belief entirely?

By surfacing assumptions, you can shift the whole line of inquiry and help people uncover more depth, all which help you establish their needs more clearly.

Work in pairs to design 2 or more questions (open or closed) you can use to:

1 Reignite a prospect that's gone cold, to establish if they want to buy now (they display S behaviour).

2 Probe to uncover the pain points of a small business owner who's outgrown their current solution (they display S / I behaviour).

3 Establish what a new prospect (with I behavior) thinks about a proposal you wrote 12 months ago for her predecessor (who was retrenched 2 months ago).

4 Find out what someone's interest are outside of their work.

5 Get to know a high D leader, who has called you and is only interested in getting a price.

6 Remove barriers to sale, when a C/D manager is querying the terms of your contract (and you know that your legal team will not make the contract changes).