

A man in a dark blue suit, white shirt, and patterned tie is looking upwards with a joyful expression. He is surrounded by a shower of falling US dollar bills, including \$100 and \$20 bills. The background is a light, neutral color.

THE RAINMAKER

Success Through
GROWTH

BUILDING LEADERS

POWERFUL QUESTIONS THAT MAKE IT RAIN

Broad, open-ended sales questions are great to get buyers talking and for helping us to find out what's going on in their worlds. They help us connect with buyers personally, understand their needs, understand what's important to them, and help them create better futures for themselves.

Following are some open-ended sales questions you can ask that will help you round out the picture of your buyer's needs. These questions are broken down into four groupings within the RAIN Selling Framework:

- Build rapport
- Ask the right questions
- Implement a solution
- Negotiate the next step

One thing to note about open-ended sales questions: They don't need to be complex. Often the basics are all you need.

RAPPORT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. What's going on in your business these days? How have things changed?
2. What are you up to this weekend?
3. It was good to hear the short version of your background at the meeting, but since we're out for lunch, I'd love to get the long version. What's your story?
4. I have to say, I really like the way you don't just have your values up on the wall like every company, but you have all the comments from your team about what the values mean to them. How did you all come up with that? I'm guessing you learned a lot about your company and team. Anything stand out?
5. You mentioned you want to retire in a few years. What are you thinking of doing then?
6. How did you get started in this business or industry?
7. How long have you been in this specific business?
8. How has the economy affected your business?
9. Where do you see the business going in the next year?
10. What specific changes do you see happening within the industry in the next three to five years?
11. What factors do you think would make a big difference to your company's success in the near future?

ASPIRATION – AND AFFLICTIONS FOCUSED QUESTIONS – Making it RAIN in a networking situation

1. Why isn't this particular technology/service/product/situation/issue working for you right now?
2. Many of our clients are reporting problems with areas A, B, and C. How are these areas affecting you? What do you think about them?
3. What's holding you back from reaching your revenue (or profit, or other) goals?

ASPIRATION – AND AFFLICTIONS FOCUSED QUESTIONS (Continued)

4. What goals and objectives do you have in general? For this area?
5. (Assuming they set the meeting) Why did you ask me to talk with you today?
6. (Assuming you set the meeting) As I mentioned earlier, I'd like to share with you a few ideas that have helped our clients succeed in the X, Y, and Z areas.
7. Before we get going, by the time we're done with this meeting, what else might you like to cover? What will make the meeting successful for you?

IMPACT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. If you could overcome these challenges, what would happen to your company's financial situation?
2. If you were to make this happen, what would it mean for you personally?
3. How would implementing these changes affect your competitiveness in the market?
4. How do you think the board of directors would evaluate the success of this initiative?
5. If you don't solve (insert the particular challenge here), what kind of difficulties will you face going forward? What won't happen that you want to happen?

QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND or PFV

1. How long has your business been in this phase?
2. How long have you been facing these challenges?
3. Is client development a part of your growth plan to insure your company's health when you are not around?
4. Have you identified some key people who can handle _____(name a specific role related to your product or service)?
5. Who are the people in your organization that would be my communication contacts?
6. Who have you used in the past?
7. What did you like best about what they provided?
8. What is your budget or price range?
9. Who are the decision makers in terms of the service I am offering?
10. How soon do you expect this service to be delivered?
11. What do you expect the solution that you purchase to look like?
12. What other options do you have?

NEW-REALITY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. If you were to wave your magic wand and it's three years from now, how will this all look different?
2. (In early sales discussions) You mentioned you're not having a good experience with your current provider. If you work with us, what are you hoping will be different?
3. (In later sales discussions) Given all we've talked about, what do you see as being different if we were to move forward together?
4. What does success look like for you...your business...this project...our work together?

NEW-REALITY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS (Continued)

5. If there were no restrictions on you – money, effort, political issues and so on do not exist – what would you change?
6. Can you tell me why you say that?
7. As you ask any open-ended sales questions, bear in mind that the most difficult task is not sounding too contrived. While we've suggested working here in this article, feel free to use the concepts, but make the wording your own when you ask the questions.
8. Sometimes all you need is to ask one question and your prospect will share with you all the information you need to help them. Other times you may need to ask a few, but make sure you don't overdo it. You don't want to make your prospect feel as if he is on the witness stand. While this article is about asking questions, don't forget that the most powerful sales conversations tend to balance inquiry (asking questions) with advocacy (talking, educating, giving advice).