

As Sellers, First Be Introspective...



*We do not learn from experience...
we learn by “reflection” upon that experience*

SELLER INTROSPECTION: the act of looking into oneself, considering your questions, thoughts, ideas, objectives and vulnerabilities, “prior to engaging” in Buyer communication.

Why Self-reflection Is So Important

Self-reflection ensures that we are not limiting our perspective to only those questions required of discovery. Being “introspective” prior to having a Buyer discussion reminds us to “slow down & consider” the areas of information that typically get lost due to an over-active sense of urgency to sell our product.

First, let’s address the elephant in the room. As Sellers, we all deal with the element of “**QUOTA**” and are driven by a plethora of other motives, both **business & personal**. Clearly, in the back of our minds, we hear the ticking of a monthly or quarterly clock that creates an ever-present sense of urgency.

One of the other problems we face as professional Questioners (aka Sellers) is the trending lack of patience that Buyers have in getting resolution to their problems. Also, consider that the ever-shrinking life cycles of existing products, and the rapid-fire iterations of innovation, are contributing to the “*need it now*” mentality of Buyers. The need for immediate answers to what & how to deploy solutions quickly, has pressured Sellers into qualifying opportunities with less than optimal data.

Seller discovery consists primarily of a repertoire of qualifying questions, linked to their chosen sales methodology. While the questions offered, likely solicit a reasonable response, they are limited by the above-mentioned situations and our own lack of a well-rounded stable of thought-provoking questions.

This scenario results in Sellers receiving mostly “top-of-mind” Buyer answers regarding their challenges. The unintended effect of this situation could be a catastrophic impact on the Sellers’ ability to understand critical issues, to create competitive differentiation and to demonstrate that the Seller truly understands the Buyers business. The consequences of this scenario not only impact the accuracy of the Sellers’ forecast but may also lead to unnecessary discounting should they make the short-list of Buyer negotiations.

Clearly, we need to be asking better questions that are based upon our intent with the question, the purpose of the question, and present the question from a variety of perspectives. However, before asking those questions we need to be “**introspective & reflective**” of how and what we are trying to accomplish. Based upon our sense of “urgency & need”, we must ensure we go beyond the typical Discovery questions and first ask “ourselves” a few questions regarding our level of preparedness.

What Are The Questions We Should Be Asking Ourselves, Prior To Our First or Second Conversation With The Buyer?

A good beginning might include questions like...

- ❖ Am I thinking about the Buyers project in too general of a way?
- ❖ Is it possible that I am too narrowly focused?
- ❖ Am I missing out on a much bigger issue & set of consequences?
- ❖ Could this project be tied to planned future projects?
- ❖ I’m entering their vendor evaluation process early to mid-phase, so how do I quickly get the ‘big picture’ without slowing down their process?
- ❖ Am I aware of individuals that could provide additional perspectives?
- ❖ What topics may require some “fluency” to ask effective questions?
- ❖ How do I want to be perceived by this Buyer(s)?
- ❖ Do I understand their culture? If not, what is my strategy for doing so?
- ❖ Where is this company in their “life cycle” and how might that impact our conversation, our questions, our approach and potential offerings?
- ❖ What Buyer "assumptions" need to be understood regarding their requirements, implementation, budget and other relevant topics?
- ❖ What early cycle Buyer objections should we be anticipating?
- ❖ What questions are likely to encourage fresh thinking around their issues?

Questions, like the ones above, begin to stimulate a healthy pre-call thought process as to your preparedness. You will also want to remain inwardly focused to think critically about the *actual* questions you ask. Consider your intent, purpose, and perspective as you construct your questions prior to speaking with Buyers.

Just a reminder..... NO WINGING IT!!!