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# How to Talk So People Listen

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**If you could grab peoples' attention, hold it and steer them where you wanted them to go – in a way that they enjoyed too – where could take your life and business?**

## WARNING:

Most everything we do has a better way and it's right under our nose. Once you realize it and see some examples, you may be asking yourself, "What else can you question and quickly change for the better?" This may irritate you into quickly constructing slightly different ways of doing most things and liberating yourself.

## It's not rocket science, but it is science

Scientists tell us we have about three seconds to make a positive impression, if not we get filtered out. Then even the most interesting subject will keep listeners engaged for about 2.5 minutes, and then we start to fade. Neither timeframe is seems nearly enough, but figure it out and you can control most any situation.

### Remember, the best communicators rule the world.

The bottom line common denominator from most all research says that we need to keep your targets' brain engaged. The easiest way, tell *engaging* stories or ask questions. Today we'll focus on questions.

Questions engage the brain, telling shifts the "listener's" brain into daydream mode, not where want them. So, what do you want to do, ask or tell? (Ah ha... a question to keep you engaged, wasn't it? Ah ha, another statement turned question. There are a lot of ways to turn telling into questions, isn't there?)

Now just because you're asking questions this doesn't mean you're on the best track, there are high quality questions (awesome) and low quality questions (inane). You need to use your questions as best as you're capable and as intentionally as possible. Work on it and you'll keep getting better and your results will follow the same line.

## High quality questions

If you can figure out how to ask a high quality questions (questions that are simply of

real interest to the target) or ask a surprise\* question you can jolt their brain out of its preprogrammed guarded state and you'll make the connection you're looking for.

***\* Surprises are not sensational click bait-like, ask those and your credibility and their trust sinks. Simply use a question they don't expect; today that simply means sincere and meaningful, as if you're actually wondering and really do want to help – as opposed to the canned questions that it sounds like you're trained to say and everyone expects you to ask. Just being real is a surprise these days. Now to make you interesting to them!***

## Low quality questions

Low quality questions are questions that turn your target off, questions that put them into daydream mode or questions that they consider inane and they have a preprogrammed response already for you (ex: "Can I help you?" "Nope, just looking."

Low quality questions separate you from your target, when you're really looking for a connection.

## Leading Questions

The answers from leading questions lead you from a to b to c... Here's the key with leading questions, it doesn't matter how your target answers, you've already anticipated the answer and the direction whether the answer is yes or no or... Often the way you phrase the question, you know what they answer will be. You simply take it from there.

## Restaurant EXAMPLE:

You decide which example is better.

**1. a)** Welcome, my name is Sara I'll be serving you today... In addition to our menu, our special today is a delicious rare grilled lamb chop with a soy glaze, asparagus and mushroom risotto. But my favorite is our burgers!

Sounded pretty much spot on, right?

Now try this one.

**1. b)** Welcome, my name is Sara I'll be serving you today... Are you familiar with our menu? No? OK, let me see if I can help you best; are you thinking meat, fish,

vegetarian..? Vegetarian? OK, we have quite a few vegan choices on the second page and the salads are right here under the appetizers. We have a few specials today, would you like to here the vegan one? No? OK...

Which of the above is most common?

Which one had no questions?

Which one missed the mark?

Which of the above may have grossed out the customer?

Which was better thought out?

Which would you prefer being subject to? Which one will probably yield bigger tips?

## People could care

Truth is, nobody really cares about our taste or our opinion, they really care about their experience, opinion and taste. So when a server says, "My favorite is..." it may feel like they're helping and the people are interested, but usually the customer is just being courteous. Better to ask questions, help your target get a custom solution – what's best for them. You'll be more appreciated, be a better help, help the restaurant get more return traffic – and get better tips! The same is true in Retail.

## Retail Example

*"Hoodies are two for \$25!"*

All I could think was, "You clown. Do I look like I need a freaking hoodie?" That's probably not what you want prospects to be thinking. Though you can train any monkey to call like you're outside a Tijuana strip club, you're only connecting with a few % who are here for hoodies and completely disconnecting from the other 90+%.

Let's see if we can come up with some better [high quality] questions to ask in retail and get you a bunch more sales and happier repeat buyers who will maybe even share their experience with others.

### **EX 1**

"Welcome to New Navy, can I help you find anything?"

"Nope."

Analysis: Woops, that was a low quality question, we're all programmed with a quick brushoff answer. Let's try again.

## **EX 2**

"Welcome to New Navy, have you been to our store before?"

"Yes/No"

"Are you looking for something for you or someone else?"

"Me/ someone else"

"What's the occasion?"

"I'm going to be outside at a lacrosse game at night and I'd like something warm and comfy."

"Hm. Would a hoodie work?"

Analysis: Better! Now you can mention specials that might be relevant. Doing so now makes sense to the client and feels custom to them; they feel like you're engaged in them and thinking that hoodies two for \$25 is your recommendation because of the recon they gathered with high quality questions.

## **Sales for the Nonsalesman**

The irony of selling is that the way that most salespeople are trained is so out of date it doesn't work very well anyway. You can be a nonsalesman and sell more than a salesman. Times are changing. Here's how.

The big key is we don't do a sales *presentation*, have a sales *conversation*.

That's because presenting means *talking at*, and a conversation means *talking with*. *Talking with* means rapport, relationship, asking questions, and listening – which are all critical to having a successful conversation ...ahem...*and* a successful sale.

# Never assume. Always ask. Always!

Have you ever been the target of a sales presentation in which the salesperson assumes they *know* what you want? What was your inner response? I'm sure you were thinking to yourself, "That's not what I want" or "That's not what I was thinking or "I wonder when they're going to actually ask me what I want... God, how long is this going to take...?" You patiently half-listen while the salesman wastes his time and yours. In the end the salesman doesn't get the sale and can't understand why.

Our company was in the market for a new phone system a couple years back, and we invited three companies in to help us find the right system for our needs. Each and every one of these so-called salesmen excitedly launched into telling us what was great about their system and started dealing out system specification sheets as if we: a) cared; and b) asked for them; and c) were actually going to read them.

In the first presentation I intervened so we could all use our time effectively and come to a conclusion. I said to the salesman, "Hold on a moment—do you even know what we want?" With a somewhat confused look, he responded, "A new phone system." I answered, "Well, kind of... Do you know what we want that system to accomplish?" "Well I suppose you want it to [and here he listed all sorts of features] ." "But how do you know that?" I asked him. "And what's the most important benefit to us?"

With that, he paused and started a new course by asking, "Well what are you looking for?" Ahhhh, now we were finally on track. He's on a path that will lead to a sale, and he's getting us more excited by asking questions that make us think and come to conclusions about what we really do want and how he can help us *get* what we want.

It seems almost ridiculous to have to help a "salesman" sell you properly, but most people in sales just don't do the basics well and they end up wasting both parties' time. Yes, build great rapport and relationship, but also *be effective* and your future client will view you as a professional.

Even though you think you know the answers to some of the questions you're thinking about asking in a sales conversation, *ask them anyway*. There are three reasons for this: 1) Never assume you know what they're going to say. (You know what they say about assuming—it "makes an ass out of you and me.") Equally importantly, 2) By *asking*, you add weight to the conversation without having to cover ground you're unsure of. And 3) You *set a course* when you ask a logical series of questions that build momentum and

leads to a conclusion: that course is what leads to the sale.

Here are the key elements of my classic sales conversation:

- Meaningful Rapport and Relationship
- Plenty of Discovery (asking and listening)
- Tie-downs along the way
- Easy A/B option sale

## Rapport and Relationship

The way to start a conversation is a varied as the number of conversations you can have and that's probably why people struggle with this part. Here's a trick, limit it. Always start the same. This way you find one that works and you use it rather than having to dream one up. If you're selling to a business the best opener (after your names and who referred you) is, "How'd you get into this business?" For most folks their business is their baby and they are mighty passionate about it. Ask this one question and then listen; they'll open up like a clam on a hot grill. From there you're off and running ting in more questions that will help you understand what you have that may be of benefit for them. We call this

## Discovery

Discovery is all about asking great questions to find out what your sales prospect likes, dislikes, wants, and needs. As a result of those questions, you find out what you need to provide to get their business. *Discovery* is a Sales Control ingredient that should be part of every sale. If you do this right, your sales prospect will tell you exactly what their hot buttons are. Hot buttons show you the things you need to provide for the prospect (through the A/B question format) so that you can lead the prospect to the sale.

Here's an example (you're a mortgage broker in this scenario) already in progress:

**You:** "I see you have a fixed-rate mortgage at 7.5%. What do you like about that loan?"

**Prospect:** "I like that the amount I pay is the same every month. It will never go up."

**You:** "Sounds like you like the assurance that you always have a handle on what your expenses are going to be."

**Prospect:** "That's exactly right."

**You:** "Have you ever had a variable loan?"

**Prospect:** "No."

**You:** "Let me ask you, if you could have a variable loan that never went over 7.5%, would you look at it?"

**Prospect:** "No, I've heard too many bad things about variable loans."

**You:** "Okay, so are you saying we need to stay on the fixed-rate side of the fence?"

**Prospect:** "Yes."

**You:** "So, if I could get you a fixed-rate loan but at a lower interest rate, what would you do with all the money you'd save?"

**Prospect:** "I'd use it for a vacation."

**You:** "Where would you go?"

**Prospect:** "Aruba."

**You:** "Why Aruba?"

**Prospect:** "I went there once when I was young. I remember the white sand, the crystal water – that's where I learned to wind surf."

**You:** "That sounds really awesome... like a trip back in time. You've never been back since you were a kid?"

**Prospect:** "Nope."

**You:** "So let me ask you, if we could get you a better mortgage, one that would save you enough to get to Aruba for an all-expenses-covered trip every couple of years, just off savings, would that be interesting to you?"

**Prospect:** "Damn straight it would."

**You:** "Actually you may get tired of Aruba as many times as you'll be going, given the money I'm going to help you save. You'll send me a post card, right?"

**Prospect:** "I sure will!"



**You:** “Okay, let’s get this paperwork taken care of. We’ll just need to decide when we get into it a bit if you want to go for a shorter or longer term. Make sense?”

**Prospect:** “Yes.”

Then, you pull out paperwork and ask whatever the first blank is – usually their name or business name.

Most salespeople have a huge fear about asking their sales prospect what they like about their current product or service—the one that you are trying to swap out for your own product or service. In fact, I see a lot of salespeople who are so afraid of asking this question, they usually completely avoid it. Why? Because they think that by asking what the prospect *likes* about their current product or service, it’s reinforcing them to *stay with what they’ve already got*.

Big mistake! By asking the prospect what they like, don’t like, and what they want in the future, you reveal hot buttons. That’s Sales Control! Once you have your hot buttons, you can lead them to the sale by asking them something like this: “So, if I could get you a service that keeps all these good things you like, but would get rid of all the bad things you don’t like and move you into something that is all-around better for you, can we do business today?”

(By the way, that was a tie-down.)

Make it a conversation, an intentional, well thought out, leading conversation where you really find what your prospective client really wants and then you do your best to fulfill that desire with what you sell.

## Be Interesting

Use this process to set yourself apart from the competition in a positive light. Selling this way is simply more interesting, and it’s more engaging for your prospect as well. Imagine them actually *participating* and *helping you get them what they need*. (Most of your competition just doesn’t do it this way; instead they either bore the poor prospect into a numb condition or irritate them – neither are good.)

Be cool. Be interactive. Be different.

And of course there's more, a lot more on speaking and using stories and understanding your target's motivations, but if you want to speak so others will listen if you want to liberate yourself from old time methods, the answer is right in front of you. Test some of these simple ideas and start experiencing what can be in your world immediately. Remember, there's a simple and better way of doing all things. Find one or two and you can liberate yourself fast.

## By John Eliason

**John Eliason is a rebel entrepreneur who teaches other entrepreneurs shortcuts that speed results. You can find more of his rebellions ideas in his business lab**

**[www.rewirelab.org](http://www.rewirelab.org)**

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