



5 Chapter Five: Questioning Strategies

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Why Have a System?

► Chapter 2:
Bonding &
Building Rapport

► Chapter 3:
Up-Front
Contracts



► Chapter 4:
Identifying Pain

► **Chapter 5:
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Questioning Strategies

Chapter 5: Summary & Learning Objectives

Chapter Description:

Participants will understand the importance and the details of how to ask questions in order to gather the information needed to make decisions about going forward or not.

Chapter Outline:

- ☐ The Dummy Curve Theory
- ☐ Dummy Phrases
- ☐ Nancy and the Seagulls
- ☐ It's the Prospect's Picture
- ☐ Reasons for the Dummy Curve
- ☐ Learning to Ask Questions
- ☐ Rules for Reversing
- ☐ Questions You Can Use
- ☐ Softening Statements
- ☐ Reverses are Softening Statements Combined with Questions
- ☐ Unasked Questions

Chapter Objectives:

At the conclusion of this Chapter, you will be able to:

- ☐ Explain the Dummy Curve.
- ☐ List four Dummy questions or phrases.
- ☐ Define Reversing and give examples.
- ☐ Explain why a Softening Statement is needed.



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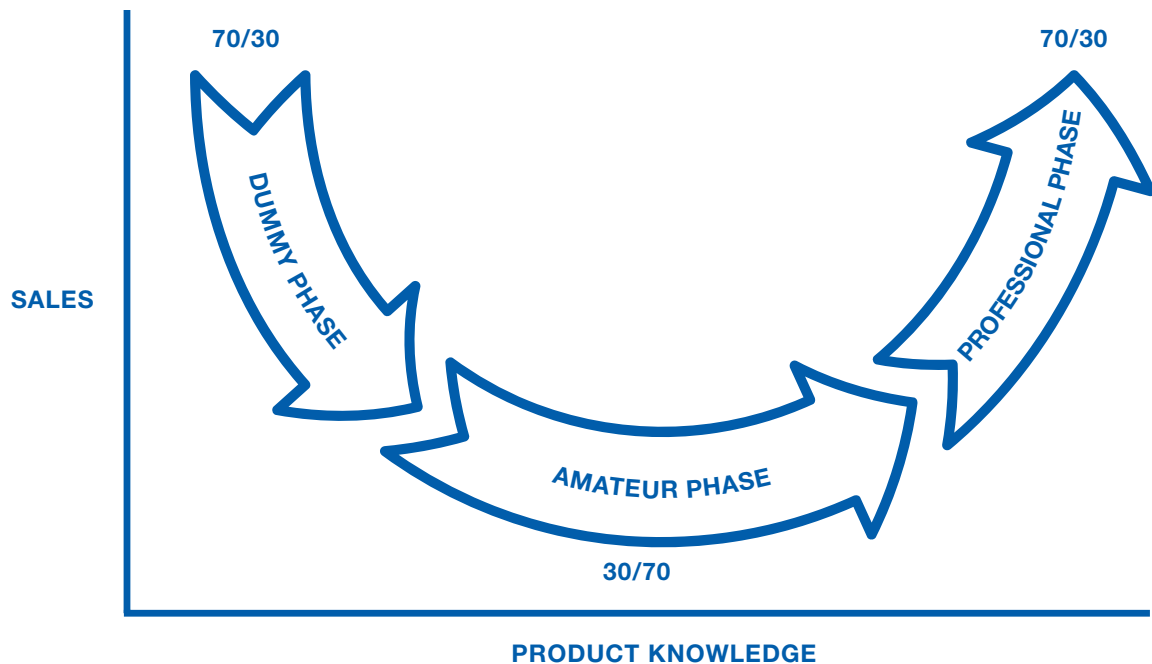
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The Dummy Curve Theory



The smartest way to interact with a prospect is:

- ☐ To allow the prospect to do 70% of the talking, while you do only 30% of the talking.

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Dummy Phrases

Some dummy phrases you can use are:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Use these phrases when a prospect makes comments like this:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



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Nancy and the Seagulls

Nancy was an eight-year-old student in the public school system in California in the 1960s. One day during art class, Nancy painted a picture. Considering her age, the picture of a house and the setting sun was really quite good. However, it was obvious that the picture was unbalanced. Nancy had painted the house and the sun to the left side of the canvas, and there was just blue sky on the right.

Nancy's art teacher observed the picture and said, "Nancy, this is a really fine painting, but it needs something on this right side." And with that, the teacher picked up a brush and painted a seagull in the upper right corner of the canvas. Nancy became very upset and began to cry.

That evening, Nancy was still upset. Her father asked, "What's the trouble, Nancy?" Nancy showed her father the painting. He admired it and said enthusiastically, "This is very good, Nancy. I really like the seagull!" At that, Nancy burst into tears and ran off to her bedroom.

After Nancy's father had learned that the seagull was the source of her unhappiness, he complained to the art teacher, who in her defense cited her reasoning and her credentials. Getting nowhere with the teacher, Nancy's father visited the school principal, and then he contacted his attorney. It was a long drawn out trial with many hours of testimony about freedom of expression, the role of an educator, and so on.

Having listened to both sides, the judge finally turned to Nancy and asked why she had become so upset about the seagull. Nancy replied, "Because I did not see it there." Case closed; decision in favor of Nancy.

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It's the Prospect's Picture

The point to be taken from "Nancy and the Seagulls" is that your prospect has a mental picture of his needs before you begin the sales interview. Every change or addition you make to that picture may cause the prospect to become uncomfortable.

If a change or addition absolutely must be made to the prospect's picture in order for you to satisfy his requirements, this change must be handled in such a way that the prospect discovers he is the one making the change.

There may be features or benefits of your product or service you believe would help you in making the sale if your prospect was aware of them. How do you paint a "seagull" (benefit or feature of your product or service) into your prospect's picture? How do you keep from violating the "seagull" rule? ("Don't paint seagulls in your prospect's picture.") The way in which you do that is to ask dummy up questions.

You "dummy up" a question in order to check out whether or not your prospect really wants the seagull in his picture. If you find he does—all to your advantage. If, however, he doesn't—no damage done.



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It's the Prospect's Picture

The individual with sharp people skills and a good understanding of the Sandler system will out-produce someone with strong technical skills any day. The real challenge is for you to learn both.



No buzzwords.



Don't spill your candy in the lobby.



Don't paint seagulls in your prospect's picture.



Learn all you can about your product or service—just don't tell it.

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Reasons for the Dummy Curve

1. Defense against unpaid consulting

- ☐ If you answer questions prematurely, you may be providing unpaid consulting.
- ☐ Too much information at the beginning may end the sale before it begins.

2. Gathering information

- ☐ You want to know what the prospect wants before you tell him what you have.
- ☐ You want to know why he wants it before you tell him what you have.

3. Dealing with the correct issues

- ☐ People buy emotionally and justify their decisions intellectually.
- ☐ Stop selling features and benefits.
- ☐ You should be focusing on the prospect's issues versus your product knowledge to make a sale.
- ☐ Sell today and educate tomorrow.



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Learning to Ask Questions



Your value as a sales professional (and ultimately the amount of your commissions) is determined more by the amount of information you gather than by the amount of information you dispense.



No mind reading.

If you are not sure:

- ☐ Why the prospect asked a question, **ASK**.
- ☐ Of the underlying intent of the question, **ASK**.
- ☐ Of the importance of the question, **ASK**.

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Rules for Reversing

The Rule of Three Plus:

- ☐ It often takes three or more reverses to clear away the smoke.
- ☐ The first two answers given by the prospect are usually intellectual in nature.
- ☐ The third answer is usually an emotional response that reflects the prospect's true intent.

The exception to the Rule of Three Plus:

When a prospect asks the identical question twice, answer it. Do not antagonize the prospect.



When reversed, a prospect will always redefine his question.



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Questions You Can Use

The following are examples of questions you can use when reversing:

Initial Questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Follow-Up Questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Softening Statements



Begin all reverses with a softening statement.



Answer every question with a question, but soften it first.

Some examples of softening statements are:

- ☐ "Good question."
- ☐ "I'm glad you asked."
- ☐ "Good point."
- ☐ "Interesting question."
- ☐ "I appreciate that question."
- ☐ "I understand."
- ☐ "That makes sense."
- ☐ "A lot of people ask that."
- ☐ "That sounds important to you."



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Reverses are Softening Statements Combined with Questions

Some examples of softening statements combined with questions are:

- ☐ "Good question...why did you bring that up just now?"
- ☐ "That's an interesting question...and the reason you asked is...?"
- ☐ "That makes sense...and that's important because...?"
- ☐ "A lot of people ask that. Can you tell me why you asked that just now?"
- ☐ "I'm glad you asked...suppose I said I could deliver this to you in two weeks?"
- ☐ "I understand. If you were me, what would you do?"
- ☐ "That sounds important to you. If we could provide that feature, what would be the next step?"
- ☐ "That's an excellent question. I really want to make sure I understand what's important to you. So, please give me an example of what that looks like around here."

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Unasked Questions

A common mistake that salespeople make is answering a question that hasn't been asked. In other words, when the prospect makes a comment, an inexperienced salesperson might treat that statement as a question and give an "answer." This happens especially when the prospect's statement is an objection or stall.

Example:

"We're happy with our current supplier" is transformed by the salesperson into "Why should we consider buying from you?".



Never answer an unasked question.



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Lessons Learned & Knowledge Testing

Chapter Summary:

Key takeaways from this Chapter:

Reversing is the strategy of answering a question with a question. A reverse consists of a softening statement and a question. When you have mastered reversing, you will get more information, as well as a better understanding of the significance of the subject.

Reversing...

- ☐ Makes certain you are answering the right questions. Prospects don't always ask for the information they want right away, or they may disguise their reason for wanting the information with a general question. If you answer the wrong questions, you might waste time, or worse, lose an opportunity to do business.
- ☐ Enables you to get information that you'll need later in the process. Before you can qualify the prospect and solve his problems, you have to know what those problems are. You don't get that information by answering questions. Remember that your success as a salesperson depends more on the amount of information you get than on the amount you present.
- ☐ Puts you in control of the discussion. The person who asks the questions determines the direction of the conversation.
- ☐ Gets the right person (the prospect) to talk. You are not making this sales call to give away information; you are there to get it.
- ☐ Gets the prospect emotionally involved in the discussion. A question is often neutral, lacking emotional content. Answers that extend beyond a simple yes or no have substance. They also require the prospect to engage with you. Finally, when a prospect is emotionally involved in a discussion, he is less likely to notice the techniques you are using.
- ☐ Helps the prospect work through his objections and needs. By talking about a problem or concern, the prospect focuses on it.
- ☐ Signals your interest in what he has to say, which flatters the prospect.

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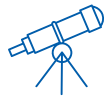
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Lessons Learned & Knowledge Testing



*Observations & Revelations:
During this Chapter, I learned:*

As a result of what I learned, I will:

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Knowledge Testing

Give a brief explanation of the Dummy Curve Theory:

List four "Dummy" questions/phrases:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Reversing means to

except when

Why use a softening statement when reversing?

Explain the Sandler Rule: "*Never answer an unasked question.*"
