

The Magic Question That Accelerates Sales

Many years ago, I worked for a company that provided IT systems integration services to large electronics manufacturers. Projects could run over \$10M so each deal was significant.

One night, I had dinner with the COO of a large potential customer. The COO's company was building a new factory. During dinner, I told the COO, "My company helped Motorola and Siemens use information technology to bring their new factory online 6 months ahead of Their faster time-to-production enabled them to generate hundreds of millions in incremental profits. "Then I asked, "Would you like to learn more about what they did?"

He put down his fork and quickly answered "yes." This one question opened the door to a very large order.

Over the years, I've learned that initiating the sales process by asking a single attentiongrabbing, curiosity-raising question is the most effective way to accelerate revenues.

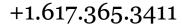
The Magic QuestionTM is that one question you need to ask to get the prospect to say "please tell me more." the trick is to generate curiosity quickly.

A typical Magic Question starts with a short story of the form "My company has developed (a new product) that has helped (a leading company in the customer's industry) achieve (the following important business benefits). It then goes in for the (sales) kill by asking, "Would you like to learn how we did it?" If phrased properly, the prospect can't help but say yes. You have now grabbed their attention and gained their implicit permission to continue to ask more exploratory questions.

While the concept of The Magic Question seems simple, developing effective Magic Questions requires close cooperation between Sales and Marketing. It is Marketing's responsibility to drive creation of The Magic Question. Marketing must provide:

- •A clear description of what you want sales to sell
- References that are respected by your prospect
- •Concisely stated business benefits delivered by your solution that you know will resonate with your prospects

Is your sales force prepared with the training and tools to drive the conversation further and accelerate the sales cycle if the prospect answers, "yes, tell me more?" Or must your sales





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team wait for the corporate cavalry to arrive to continue the dialogue? Forcing a delay by improperly equipping sales will unnecessarily slow the sales cycle. As many sales executives have told me, "delays have killed many deals." It is Marketing's responsibility to ensure that Sales is equipped to use The Magic Question to accelerate closing business.

The process of generating The Magic Question can be a powerful test of your understanding of the business value delivered by your product.

Do you know The Magic Question for each of your product and services?

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