

# 9 Active Listening Steps to Effortlessly Sell Prospects

By Sam Manfer

Interviewing is the most important step of sales calls and relationship development. Interviewing requires asking stimulating questions that get prospects to discuss their wants relative to what you're offering. However, interviewing also requires active listening. That is, listening with an ear to learn and understand.

When someone opens up, it's a major step in selling them or building your relationship. Some people require more effort than others to open up. That's why you have to have a strategy to get people talking. But no matter how much effort is required, when that prospect starts talking, it's time for you to start listening, gathering information and not interrupting.

Interrupting shuts people down or makes them defensive. So if your prospect is somewhat on track, let him talk and you'll gather a boat load of relevant information. Keep in mind, people answer your questions in their own way and it's usually not in the direct way you'd like. So give them a little slack and let them ramble a bit. Your attention will show them you're interested, while you learn their issues and wants and the subtleties of what will make them warm to you.

## An Interviewing Strategy

I have a process I use for all my sales calls. It consists of **1**- asking open ended questions about issues and concerns as they relate to my services, then **2** - listening. While listening, **3** - I take notes, underlining powerful and ambiguous words that I'll get more clarity on later. Once the prospect has finished talking and explaining, **4** - I ask him to define his meaning of power words, such as low price, good service, reliable company, etc. Once I understand, **5** - I expose and entice the prospect with benefits and/or features he didn't mention but I feel he should have. From this questioning, listening and suggesting sequence I feel I know what's wanted, but **6**- I confirm back to the prospect to see if I got it correctly and so he realizes I understand. If so, **7** - I ask if he is interested in hearing my presentation of how I can help him. After I present, **8** - I ask how he feels about what I just presented. If good, **9A** - I ask for his commitment. If ambivalent or not so good, **9B** - I clear up concerns and/or objections and then ask for his commitment.

Each of these steps has power and purpose. It is extremely effective for sales calls and relationship development meetings. It will produce all the information so that you can structure a presentation to move prospects to commitment, or cement relationships or to indicate that you've got a non-buyer at this time and it's time to leave.

## Test It Out

Next person you're with – wife, child, friend, waiter, etc., ask an open-ended question and don't speak for (4) seconds. This will be a major challenge, but work on it. When she/he starts speaking, don't interrupt. Just keep nodding. Notice how much this person tells you.

Now pick out something she/he said and ask to clarify it. I.e. The waiter says, “The fish is really good tonight.” You say, “What is it about the fish that makes it so good?” Wait for him to talk and notice how much more you learn about the fish.

Now offer up something the waiter didn’t say, but you feel he should have said, such as, “You didn’t say anything about the freshness of the fish, or the seasoning, or what other customers have said about tonight’s fish.” You’ll notice you’ll get even more information.

I could continue with the remaining steps, but it would get a little crazy. You’re not trying to sell the waiter. However, for those you are trying to sell, you’ll have to practice with someone how you’ll implement the 9 steps above. As logical and simple as they sound, they are difficult to do. And if you think you can short cut the process, test it both ways. But, I’m confident you’ll discover you get to where you want to be faster and easier implementing all 9 steps.

**Source:** <http://www.sammanfer.com/>