



Find The Keystone

By Mike Stewart, CSP

The keystone is the supporting element upon which all other interrelated things depend. In architecture, it is the wedge-shaped stone at the highest point of an arch that locks the others in place. Just as the keystone in an arch is the key to everything else, so is the "keystone" in a selling situation.

The keystone in a selling situation is the primary benefit the buyer is looking for. It is the deciding factor in a purchasing decision and could be one, or a combination, of a countless number of things, such as:

- Efficacy of a product
- Ongoing service
- Return on investment, or
- Personal relationship with the salesperson.

Identifying the keystone in a selling situation is much tougher than simply locating an architectural keystone, which is obvious. In a selling situation, if you assume what the keystone is, you will likely make a serious mistake, one that has cost an untold number of otherwise professional salespeople more sales than they can imagine. Until you ask, you really don't know what the buyer will base his decision on.

Ask Better Questions that Make the Difference

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Discovery is the Heart of the Sale. Decision makers expect salespeople to have the gift of gab and to talk, often at length, about their products and services. Many are conditioned to disregard much of a sales presentation. Fortunately, however...

Most people are conditioned to answer questions, so ask open-end questions. Probe the choice points, and stay in Discovery until you identify the primary benefit your prospect is looking for, the one that the buying decision will turn on.

Here are some good techniques for asking questions that keep your buyer involved in the sales

process and get results:

- Ask open-end sequential questions such as,

"What is the biggest problem you have in this area?"

"What are you doing about it?" or,

"What do you see as areas where you still need improvement?"

- Use techniques to keep your buyer involved and on track providing you with the kinds of details you need to find the keystone such as: "That's interesting. Tell me more," "What would be the perfect answer to this problem?" or, "What would solving this problem mean to you?"
- If you don't seem to be getting closer to the keystone, use the Power of Three: Ask the same question three times, three different ways and you will usually get to the heart of the matter.

Focus on what's in it for your customer and try not to think about your own self-interest while talking with your prospect. Remember that the customer is depending on you to be his advocate and keep his best interests in mind. These three tips will help you outdistance your competition and develop a stronger sense of trust and confidence with your prospect:

- Be patient. Most people prefer to buy, not be sold.
- Be quiet. Let your buyer talk 80% of the time.
- Follow the customer's lead. Let him take you to what matters most.

***Keep asking until you find the keystone,
the one question at the heart of it all.***

***Then you can start working
your way back out gain.***

That's when you start finding answers.

***– Alex Cross, "Mary, Mary"
by James Patterson***

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International sales trainer and consultant, Mike Stewart, CSP, specializes in hiring and developing high-performance sales teams. He is a leading authority in diagnosing and overcoming Sales Call Reluctance. To learn more about Mike and the services and products his company offers, go to www.StewartSalesDynamics.com.

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If you are a member of the media and would like to interview Mike or feature more of his articles in your publication, please contact him at Mike@StewartSalesDynamics.com or 1-866-515-0022.

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