



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# Lessons from a Toothache— Part 2

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In the November 2011 issue of *The Stepping Stone*, I discussed what I learned about selling from having a royally painful toothache. I learned two lessons from this incident:

## LESSON #1: NO PAIN = LACK OF URGENCY

If a prospect is not purchasing your product or service, they are not experiencing enough pain with their current situation.

## LESSON #2: ACTION IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE AMOUNT OF PAIN EXPERIENCED

To be successful selling product, services or ideas, we must find the pain the prospect is experiencing **and** it must be acute enough to take action now.

In Part 1, we discussed **Strategy #1**, which is to “*find prospects experiencing great pain.*”

In this issue we will look at the second of three strategies to non-manipulatively utilize the concept of “pain” to grow your business and leadership influence.

## STRATEGY #2: FIND THE PAIN

Strategy #1 is all about finding prospects who are already consciously aware of the pain of their current situation. Strategy #2 is about helping the prospect in front of you **become** painfully aware of the current problems (pun intended).

What do people do with pain? They avoid it by burying it deep inside where they don't have to deal with it. For example, do you know anyone who deals with financial difficulties by not opening their bills? Obviously, avoiding bills doesn't make them go away. But it may make your friend feel better for the moment.

In the same way, many prospects have **real** problems where you can help them, but they are ignoring the

consequences of these problems, which equates to little or no urgency to find a solution.

Our task as influencers or sellers is to awaken their pain (note: I didn't say “create pain” – that would be manipulative). So how do we do this?

## AWAKEN PAIN BY ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

By mastering the skill of asking effective questions in the right order, you can turn a disinterested prospect into one desperate for your services. Again, we are not manipulating, but awakening the pain that already exists.

Here are key categories of questions you want to ask (with generic examples):

### 1. Rapport Building

Start off by asking questions about them. Find common ground. Be curious about what interests them about the areas you can help them with.

### 2. Goals and Desired Results

After you develop some rapport, now turn your questions to find out what they want to accomplish. Questions like:

“What results would you like to see happen in the next year?”

“What do you really want?”

“What would that result allow you to do that you can't do today?”

These questions get them really in touch with unmet desires – results they want that they don't currently have.

### 3. Problems, Obstacles and Challenges

This set of questions does more to awaken pain than any other.

“What's not working?”

“What's preventing you from achieving your desired results?”

“What is having these challenges costing you (e.g., financially, emotionally, relationally, physically, etc.)?”

Here we are cutting to the chase. If these questions do not awaken pain (frustration, anger, etc.), then either a) you are fishing in the wrong pond or b) your prospect just does not have a big enough problem to seek out help.

If it is the latter situation, be encouraged, you just identified a non-prospect. Time to move on (better than wasting your time!).

## INVITATION TO MOVE FORWARD

After you ask questions in category three, if there is plenty of pain, you can present your solution – one that precisely meets their needs.

Finally, you want to ask a question that invites the prospect to take the next step.

“How does this solution sound to you?”

“Would you like to move ahead?”

So if you are dealing with a prospect who is not already feeling the urgency to find help, learn to ask these four categories of questions.

*In Part 3 we will look at the third strategy to non-manipulatively utilize the concept of “pain” to grow your business and influence.*

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