

INTERVIEW

4

In the AID, Inc.® system of selling, the Interview Step becomes the most important one. When it's done well, the rest of the sale becomes easier, and you'll greatly increase your chances of closing.

At first, this statement may sound exaggerated. "After all," some may say, "The most important step is the close." "Nothing happens until you close," they may say. And, of course, they're right. You don't get paid until you close a sale.

But the close is influenced more by the interview than by any other step. One of our Integrity Selling® principles is that you don't sell in the close. You close after you've already sold.

Integrity Selling® really redefines what selling is. In the past, selling has been defined as a process where we give out product information and then attempt to convince people they need what we have.

But in the last few years we have made giant strides in understanding the psychology of selling.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELLING

In just a moment we'll think of some principles that explain the psychology of selling. But before you read them, first take a moment and think of people from whom you like to buy – people from whom you have purchased. Then please write down two or three of their names and then alongside them, write the reason *why* you like to buy from that person.

	Name	Reason
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

Then take a moment and think of people you don't like to buy from. People who make you feel uncomfortable or offend you. Please write down their names and the reason why you *don't* like to buy from them.

	Name	Reason
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

Now, if you've written down these names, you've discovered a lot about the psychology of selling. Please take a moment and think and then write down what you discovered.

Keep thinking about what you've discovered as you read the following principles of Integrity Selling.®

1. People like to buy. They don't like to be sold.
2. Trust and rapport must precede any selling efforts.
3. People are more apt to buy when they're talking than when you're talking.
4. People are more apt to believe what they tell you rather than what you tell them.
5. The moment people think you're trying to sell them something, they naturally get defensive or resistant.
6. People must "discover" their own needs for themselves before they'll buy.
7. People don't believe they have a need just because you tell them they do.
8. Never proceed with a sales presentation until a person has admitted a need and a desire to seek a solution.
9. You can listen a person into buying much faster than you can talk them into it.
10. The best way to impress people is to listen to them, not to tell them about how wonderful you are.

Discoveries in the psychology of selling help us learn the need for *social interaction* in a selling process. What is social interaction? It's give and take. Asking questions and listening. Giving feedback to people as you listen – nodding approval, giving them gestures, verbalizing approval. This social interaction is what professional selling is and what powerfully influences buying decisions.

Understand the power of this social interaction and you'll see why the AID,Inc.® system works so well. In our system people often want to buy from

you long before you can get around to making a presentation and attempting to close.

Here are some factors that prepare a person to want to buy from you:

1. Trusting you.
2. Feeling comfortable around you.
3. Not feeling pressured by you.
4. Not feeling that you're trying to sell them something but that you are only there to see if they have a real need.
5. Asking them indirect questions that are neither leading nor manipulative but information-gathering.
6. Getting them discovering their needs, admitting them, and verbalizing their desire for need-fulfillment.

INTERVIEW ACTION GUIDES

Here are the action guides for the Interview Step. Notice that they are principles that can be applied to many different people.

1. Ask open-ended, indirect questions that draw out wants or needs.
2. Listen to and paraphrase all points – write them down.
3. Identify dominant wants or needs and get agreement.
4. Assure people that you want to help them enjoy the most value.

AN INFORMATION-GATHERING INTERVIEW

You may be selling widgets, consulting services, computer hardware or software, dental or psychiatric services, or whatever. You may sell face-to-face or over the telephone. Your sales contacts may be quick or they may take several visits over a period of time.

Everyone will interview differently, but everyone benefits by doing the principles of the Interview Step.

Your interview is set up with an effective approach. In your approach

you have asked a qualifying question that in essence says and asks, "We help people (or organizations) like you enjoy the benefits of _____ (mention benefits you give). I don't know whether or not you would receive value from what we offer, but if you don't mind I'd like to ask a few questions to see if what we have would be right for you."

You, of course, would substitute your own appropriate words in the above sentences that would, in effect, customize them for you.

Then you'll want to proceed to your Interview Step. Depending on the time it takes, you may want to do it now, or you may want to schedule a special appointment to return and do it. Obviously, the larger the sale the more time will usually be spent in your interview.

Also, the larger the sale you make, the more background information you may need to get about the organization and the nature of its business. Then, too, you may need to do your homework about the decision makers – how they make decisions, what the power structure is, and who else they've been buying from.

The purpose of your interview is to get information that will tell you what someone's needs, wants or problems are; which will tell you whether or not you can help them.

Again, depending on what you're selling, you'll want to get some of the following information:

1. What they've been using.
2. What they're looking for that they haven't found.
3. What quantity they purchase.
4. What budget or price range.
5. What's their degree of interest?
6. Who else will be involved in the purchase?
7. What problems they want to solve.
8. What objective are they trying to reach?

As you ask questions, be sensitive to the person. Talk in tones that communicate integrity and confidentiality. Set a serious tone because you're talking about serious matters.

Don't rush through the fact-finding interview. In getting information and carefully listening you have a great opportunity to intensify your rapport with people. Here are some suggestions for doing that. Remember, tremendous selling takes place in this process of interaction – of asking questions, listening, responding, and giving psychological value to the person.

1. Look at your questions when interviewing, and then look into their eyes as people respond.
2. Listen to *what* they say and *how* they say it.
3. Listen to their attitudes and emotions.
4. Carefully observe their body language.
5. Never interrupt people.
6. Give feedback to prove you listened – nod approval, verbalize agreement (I see what you mean, etc.), smile, paraphrase their responses.

This interactive process will deepen your rapport with people when done with sensitivity and finesse. Don't just blow through the interviewing process. Let them get off on tangents if they want to. Listen to their meanderings. This gives you a perfect chance to get closer to them emotionally and allows them, unconsciously, to get close to you. Without consciously realizing it, they'll trust you more and will make a decision that you're the type of person they'd like to do business with.

In cases where a person is overly sensitive about giving you the information you want, be careful and sensitive. Don't push them or make them feel emotionally crowded.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In your seminar session you designed some need-development questions. Since practicing them you'll probably be able to design more specific ones now. Really, as you learn more and more about needs-focused selling, you'll learn how to ask indirect questions with more and more finesse.

Here's the work-up to designing your own need-development questions.

1. Begin by identifying wants or need you think your customers probably have.

In the following spaces write down the wants or needs that customers might have that you can help them fill.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

- f. _____

- g. _____

- h. _____

2. Then write down specific information that you need to know before you can understand someone's specific wants or needs.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

- f. _____

-
- g. _____

 - h. _____

3. Now, write out some actual open-ended, indirect questions that you can ask that will get you the information you need to know before you can fully understand a person's needs, wants or problems.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

- f. _____

- g. _____

- h. _____

HOW TO SET THE STAGE TO ASK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Depending on what you're selling and whether it's face-to-face or by telephone, you can generally follow these ideas.

1. Have permission to proceed with your interview.
2. Have questions prepared to ask the person. Of course, the product or service you sell will dictate the extent of preparation you need to make.
3. Whether in person or over the telephone, have your questions organized so you can write responses to them.

4. If in person, carefully create the image of an interviewer – not a salesperson. Don't take products or brochures in with you. You're only there to interview to see if they have a need you can help them fill.
5. Tell yourself, "It's not my purpose to sell or do a presentation – my only purpose is to interview and get the information I need."

When your purpose is only to do fact-finding, you'll communicate a very professional presence. The "non-sales" approach will have a strong influence in helping you gain rapport and make a statement about your professionalism.

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR STYLES

You'll interview different Behavior Styles differently. Different people want to travel at different speeds and give different amounts of information.

It's much more complex than this, but here are some suggestions to remember when interviewing people.

1. Talkers -

Will give you lots of information. They'll ramble and be scattered in their responses. They'll often be too general with their information. They'll enjoy your listening to them, so let them do most of the talking.

You may need to pull other people into the interview, especially if you need a lot of specific facts or information.

Talkers will mix a lot of conversation into the information they give you. If you're a facts-oriented person, be careful to let them talk and don't cut them off too quickly.

2. Doers -

Will not want to take much time giving you information. Will want to hit the high spots. Probably will want to give you a few bottom-line responses and suggest you get the other information you need from other people or sources.

Be very careful to respect their time. Be sure to intermingle questions like:

- a. "How did you get where you are today?"
- b. "What are some of the reasons for your outstanding success?"
- c. "What advice would you have for people who want to be as successful as you?"
- d. "What's the most important success principle you've learned?"
- e. "How are you able to juggle so many balls in the air and get so much done?"

Respect their power, authority, and ego.

3. Plodders -

Be slow, thorough and methodical. Don't rush them. Ask them about job-functions – the process they want carried out.

Find out what they want, but mainly find out what risks they want to avoid. Find out what their fears are. Ask about their decision time frame.

Listen carefully to them. If you're a Doer, you'll move too fast for them. They'll feel intimidated by your power or presence. If you're a Talker, you may exhibit too much levity or lack of concern for proper functions.

4. Controllers-

Be very businesslike and well-organized with Controllers. They like that. Have your interview questions carefully written and organized in a logical order.

Keep small talk to a minimum. Respect their value of time and organization. Be very logical and unemotional. Ask information-gathering questions rather than feeling ones.

They'll value exactness and specific questions that you ask. They're interested in the controls, guarantees, and fail-safe devices you can offer.

If you're a Talker, you'll have a difficult time being objective, unemotional and rational enough for them because they respect facts, data and proof, not feelings, enthusiasm or emotions.

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW

Open-ended questions are ones you ask that call for an explanation. Closed-ended questions call for yes or no responses. Open-ended ones get your people talking and you listening – which allows you to do 80% of the listening and 20% of the talking.

You can accomplish many objectives by asking appropriate open-ended questions.

Depending on the type of people you sell goods or services to, they often have fear and apprehension as you approach and interview them.

When you sense this, try to get it out into the open. Don't try to ignore it or gloss over it. Get them admitting their fears and unpleasant experiences. Ask, "What unpleasant experiences have you had buying – before?" Then listen non-defensively. Nod approval as they talk about their negative experiences. Verbalize your understanding, "I understand how you feel."

The power of this can often sway even the most resistant person to your side long before you ever get into any actual selling.

As you do this, they'll often release their pent-up negative feelings. They'll also unconsciously say, "Hey, since this person cares enough to ask and is listening so well, I'm sure he or she isn't like other salespeople who were pushy or didn't really care about my needs!"

In addition, here are some other questions you can ask people in different situations.

1. In developing stronger rapport:

"How did you get into your present job?"

"What factors contributed most to your overall success?"

"If you were to give advice to people wanting to be as successful as you, what would it be?"

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2. To neutralize a potential objection of, “I don’t have any money.”
“How often are we able to find money for what we really want?”
 3. To overcome possible objection, “I have an obligation to buy from another person or company.”
“What are some reasons why you’d choose one product or vendor over another?”
 4. To get potential fears or problems to the surface that you may have thrown at you later:
“What risks do you run when you make a purchase decision for (fill in what you’re selling)?”

These and other questions will help you direct people’s thinking in a powerful but subtle way. They help them “discover” the right answers. They help neutralize objections before they come up later.

Learn questions like this that get people reflecting on objections they might have. Ask them *before*, *during*, and *after* your interview questions.

You’ll want to pave the way for a successful presentation by mentioning the benefits you think you can help them enjoy. You’ll want to do this whether you move immediately into your demonstration or if you need to spend time preparing a presentation or proposal.

Before making a presentation, you’ll want to refer back to the needs that have been identified and ask, in your own words, “If I am able to help you enjoy the benefits you have agreed that you have, will you give due consideration to my proposal?”

After gaining this commitment, review the needs again and make it clear that the purpose of your presentation is to show them how you can help them enjoy satisfaction of the wants or needs they admitted having.

You’ll then get into your demonstration.

ASK YOURSELF THESE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

After your interview has been finished, you'll want to ask yourself these questions. They'll help you analyze your contact and learn from it.

“How strongly did they discover and admit their own needs?”

“Do they have the money or budget to pay for a solution?”

“How strong is the relationship we established?”

“What's our biggest obstacle to a sale?”

“How much better off will they be because of having my product or service?”

“What end-result benefit will they enjoy?”

“Is my recommendation the very best one for them?”

Remember the importance of your positioning. When you go for your interview (if you make outside calls), don't take products, brochures, or anything that says you're there to sell them something.

Take with you a leather portfolio with a legal or letter-sized pad in it with some key need-development questions written on it. You can even simulate the same professional posturing if you're calling on the telephone.

If you sell over the telephone, mentally leave sales aids or products behind. Focus only on getting information.

Remember, your only purpose is to get them to admit a need and get sufficient information in order to prepare a plan for them.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU'VE DONE THIS STEP

1. People openly admit needs to you.
2. You understand these needs.
3. People admit a desire for a solution.
4. You have all the necessary information you need in order to prepare a plan of action.
5. You have strengthened your trust and rapport with your prospective client.
6. You have an appointment for a presentation

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR INTERVIEW

1. This step is where most of the selling takes place – although it appears that no selling takes place at all.
2. Be serious and sensitive when asking interviewing questions. Remember, people may have some reluctance in giving you information.
3. Set up your interview with a bit of chit-chat if the person is a Talker or Plodder. Create a mood of friendliness, or business, depending on their style.
4. Ask lots of open-ended questions.
5. Ask indirect, not leading or manipulative, ones.
6. Learn to listen people into buying rather than trying to talk them into buying.
7. Anticipate possible objections and ask about them in your interview.
8. Remember, people are more apt to change their minds when it's their idea than when it's your idea.
9. People are more apt to want to buy from you because you listen to them and try to understand their needs than when they think you're doing a sales presentation on them.
10. You're not selling in this step. You're simply identifying people's needs.

INTERVIEW SELF-EVALUATION SHEET

Please answer the following questions, after reading this interview section and before going to the next one.

1. What have you learned about interviewing people from this segment?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

2. What are your strengths in this step?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

3. What areas do you need to strengthen within yourself in this area?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

4. Now, *before proceeding to the next chapter*, make an appointment to visit with your manager or with the program coordinator to discuss your responses written above.