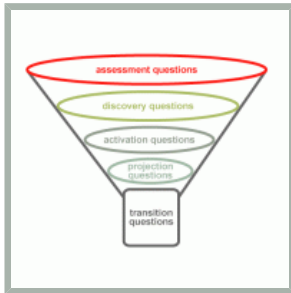


ADAPT interview framework



characteristics

author:	Ingram, Thomas N.
country:	United States
period:	1995
type:	model
role:	consultant and change agent
activity:	analyse and reflect
topic:	marketing & sales
abstr. level:	organisation
perspective:	learning
status:	under review
module:	personal selling
comments:	0

description:

In the early 1990's, the American marketing professor Thomas Ingram, co-developed the ADAPT questioning system to support relationship-based selling that requires a long term focus and spans multiple sales meetings. The method aimed first to identify the wider, organisational situation, then discover and explore customer needs. ADAPT is most effective for complex, large sales processes at key accounts and covers the entire consultative sales process.

ADAPT stands for five strategic questioning stages:

1. ASSESSMENT Questioning

The initial phase -- when the sales' goal is to validate factual information from desk research on customers, market trends, objectives and operations. This phase must be kept short.

2. DISCOVERY Questioning

The sales person should acquire full understanding of the customer's problems based on factual information from the previous stage plus the customer's perceptions, feelings and interpretations. The sales person helps determine the key problems with such discovery questions as, " *How satisfied are you with the quality of your raw materials?*" and " *What problems in the primary process have you recognized?*" A discovered need that is implied does not lead automatically to a purchase.

3. ACTIVATION Questioning

The purchasing party should want to find a solution to a particular problem. The first signs of customer discomfort are often noticeable in changes of body language. The sales personnel must explore the impact of the problem for the customer to realise that action is required. Questions such as " *What are the effects of* " and " *To what extend* " belong to the activation stage.

4. PROJECTION Questioning

The customer needs to become aware of the benefits of eliminating the problem by exploring the benefits of a particular solution. The costs/ benefits need to be compared for the customer to assess the value of the transaction. Projecting how the organisation would operate without the identified problem helps the customer in this thought process. If/then questions fall into this category.

5. TRANSITION Questioning

The sales person moves from needs discovery to explaining a solution's key features, advantages and benefits. Questions need to be in a closed format in order to validate a customer's commitment: " *Would you be interested in* ".

The five stages operate such that one sequence of questions becomes input for questions at the following level. During phases 1-4, the sales person only probes and steers to encourage the customer to communicate as much as possible. The need fulfilment or purchase follows once the need development and need awareness phases have been concluded. During this transition phase 5, the sales person should specify the solution to the customer.

assets:

	ADAPT interview framework ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.1 • 33 KB
	ADAPT role play evaluation form ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.1 • 223 KB
	non verbal behaviour classes ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.1 • 42 KB
	question type matrix for effective communication ProvenModels • version 0.1 • 47 KB

pros:

- ADAPT focuses on the customer's wider organisational problems, rather than only on the benefits of an individual product or service. It helps the seller avoid seller-imposed limitations and encourages the customer to define the problem and desire a solution.
- The method has proven successful in more complex and large scale sales processes rather than in single product supplier situations where developing a long-term relationship does not merit the investment in time and effort.
- The questioning process helps build greater trust and rapport between the sales-person and customer.
- The method helps prevent a sales person from trying to sell products too early in the sales process.

cons:

- Successful adoption of ADAPT requires time-consuming practice by the sales person. Its application occurs on the behavioural level.

- The method was not derived from a large empirical data set, so is most likely prone to industry and country specific conditions.
- The method is best used for large scale sales in the business-to-business arena, making it a lesser choice for small, product related deals and business-to-consumer exchanges.

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