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*Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers.*

*- Anthony Robbins*

## The Worst Sales Question to Ask?

Maybe there's a sales question or two that you'd like to take back and erase permanently from your memory; and everyone else's too, for that matter. And even if you haven't inserted a foot -- and leg, and perhaps a thigh -- into your mouth, you can certainly think of a dozen *awful* sales questions to ask. Well, here's a gem to add to your list of things never to ask: **NO QUESTION AT ALL.**

Running out of questions must not be an option for effective sales performers. If it happens, then at least one of these these things have probably happened:

- ⇒ you're not capitalizing on answers to advance the dialogue
- ⇒ you aren't reframing your questions (same question, different context)
- ⇒ you've made the sale, but aren't inquiring to find new sales opportunities

And there's still more.

The thing is, a phase that we'll call *screening and qualifying questions* should take place before accepting an assignment or project. Doing this allows you to find out:

- ✓ what is needed
- ✓ why it's needed
- ✓ what it's needed for
- ✓ why, how, when, and for how much YOU are going to solve all of these needs

Perhaps you'll discover that you *aren't* the right solution, and that your prospect hasn't developed her/his awareness of what needs to be done (or perhaps how much to pay for it!). On the other hand, you might find out that you've arrived at your dream assignment, and you want to go celebrate.

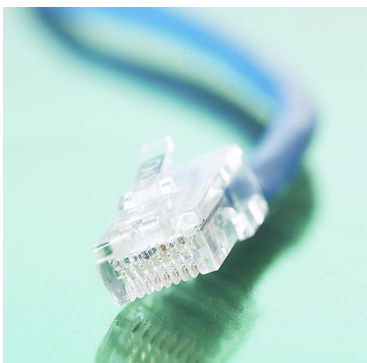
Either way: you'll only know by *asking questions*, because the only bad question to ask is *no question at all.*

## eNewsletters: Find and Keep Customers

Here's something I've learned: eNewsletters are an ideal customer outreach solution.

They're cost effective, enthusiastically-received by target audiences, and establish a dynamic communication channel that conveys both industry and firm-specific information. They also *manage* information, so that customers understand how to use it to their advantage -- which they love and reward firms for doing. The result? New customers, more customer loyalty, improved brand recognition, enhanced competitive advantage, and let's not forget: a boost in sales. All good things.

AMST, in a strategic partnership with the business copywriting firm **ClearText** and the customer email marketing firm **OpenMoves**, is pleased to announce its entry into the world of e-Newsletter design, production, distribution and tracking. Phone or email and find out how to get on board with this ideal customer outreach solution.



*eNewsletters: customer acquisition and loyalty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

## When to Divorce your Customers

The idea of divorcing a customer flies in the face of what many people think is sensible business strategy.

After all, why would you want to deliberately sever business ties with *any* customer? Isn't that counterproductive; or worse: irrational? Doesn't the very thought of divorcing a customer seem like admitting failure? Won't that customer merely go find someone else (i.e. not YOU) to serve her/his needs?

Ah yes. Reflecting on these looming, even *threatening* questions allows us to see this issue in its emotional *anti*-clarity. The thing is, the idea of divorcing customers can be filtered by so much negative self-talk, that the idea of divorcing a customer can -- for years -- remain just that: *an idea*.

Meanwhile, back at the business, some (or all!) of this keeps on happening:

- you maintain an unprofitable customer relationship just "because it's already there"
- you subject yourself to unreasonable customer expectations (or demands) that force you to make changes/compromises you don't want to make
- your customer takes a hostile attitude towards you and then, well, just maintains it for a few years
- your customer no longer fits your business profile, and therefore distracts your focus and your resources
- your customer is geographically inaccessible, and therefore you can't effectively (cost or otherwise) deliver on your service commitments



*Sometimes exiting a bad professional relationship is the right thing to do – for both of you.*

Yes, when we lay things out like this in bullet list form, divorcing a customer doesn't seem so wrong anymore; in fact, it seems *mandatory*. After all, a business that doesn't -- or *won't* -- divorce a customer often loses money every day of the working "relationship". How can that be healthy?

Still, we need to ask: why are so many businesses reluctant - or just outright afraid - to take action and end a toxic, unprofitable, counterproductive, and perhaps even *hostile* business relationship?

The answer is this: many businesses feel that divorce is the **only** resort; and this makes it unacceptable to them. Yet there are **key strategic steps** that can be taken *before* reaching this final stage, including:

- conducting brainstorming sessions with the customer to realign expectations/perspectives
- revisiting key business variables, such as: structure of work, pricing, service packages, scheduling, and so on
- revisiting existing agreements and editing them to reflect a gap between reality and idealism

These strategies can often inspire new processes, or simply refreshed *attitudes* that can - in some wonderful cases - change a toxic business relationship into something worth keeping.

Yet...yes there will be times where differences are irreconcilable; either due to logistics, expectations, or sometimes, just different needs and goals. In these cases, a **divorce does not and should not be destructive**. Stay friends with your customer. Help them find another resource, and give them notice so transition can be easier.

Indeed, divorcing a customer can seem like an unthinkable concept. However, when all other strategies have been exhausted, and when you're losing money with every episode (we can't call them transactions anymore), then a divorce can be the best solution for everyone involved; both you and your customer.

And who knows? Perhaps, in the future, an opportunity to work together again may arise. It can happen; but even if it *doesn't*, you'll have done what you need to do: saved your business from a destructive, draining, and unprofitable relationship. It's the very best thing you can do when there's nothing else to do.