



THE QUESTIONS BEHIND THE QUESTIONS

When it comes to talking about, and marketing our professional services we tend to answer questions about our services at their face value.

This is a big mistake. What people ask and what they really want to know are two quite different things. So, if you answer the question they ask, they don't get the answers they want.

Confusing? Definitely!

The first question everyone asks us is “What do you do?”

That's THE question.

But if we answer it at face value we don't communicate much of real value:

“I'm a management consultant.”

(OK, now I have your label, but I really don't know what that means to me.)

or...

“I do workshops on productivity and performance.”

(Better, but still I'm not seeing a big benefit here.)

or...

“I work with software firms, helping them become more productive and profitable.”

(Yeah, I could see that this would be valuable.)

or...

“I work with startup software firms who are struggling to make a profit.”

(Bingo! My son-in-law works for a company like that!)

So what's the underlying question to “What do you do?”

My observation is that it's, “Are you someone who can help me?”

Now the person you're talking to may not work for software firm that's struggling to make a profit, but if they do (or know someone who does), you've hit a vital nerve with your answer. None of the other answers even get close.

Wouldn't it be great if it got easier from there?

Well, it doesn't! Because people keep talking in code, you have to decipher the next question as well.



Here it is:

“That’s great, how do you do that?”

Wait. That’s not the question.

Translation: ***“What kind of results do you produce for your clients?”***

The answer goes like this:

“The clients who work with me get these kind of results: They become profitable in six months or less and stop struggling with cash flow.”

This is music to a prospect’s ears. It’s the language of results.

Just make sure you talk about what you can really deliver.

This kind of marketing language will get the attention and interest of prospects, and make them want to know more. But you’re not done yet. You’re going to get more coded questions:

“That’s terrific. But how does your service work?”

The red lights should go off at this point.

Don’t go down that path.

Better men and women than you and I have gone there... never to return.

The vast majority tend to go in one of two directions.

“Tech-talk” that explains their approach or process in excruciating detail and is utterly confusing to the average person.

“The sub-optimal performance horizon undermines the maximization of variable input factors in the productivity matrix. So we co-harmonize these factors.”

Huh??

Or they spin off in the opposite direction, explaining how their service works in terms so generic that they lose all impact.

“Well, we’re all about productivity, alignment and commitment. When we get those things going, results tend to improve.”

Well, Duh!

Both of these approaches are dead ends. Nobody really wants to know how your service works.

The hidden question behind the question is: “Do your services actually work?”



Tell a story.

Success stories about how you helped specific clients get listeners hanging on your every word.

"We met a very promising start-up software firm who didn't think they could hold on another month. We helped them get their cash flow working, got them some more money and then showed how they could sell the software faster to their target market. Nine months later they are profitable and growing quickly."

Not so hard, right?

You can do this quite successfully with a little practice. Prepare several success stories in verbal and written form. They can be powerful persuasion tools.

Starting to get the idea?

If you don't understand the real questions beneath the standard questions, you'll miss the opportunity to tell people what they really want to know.

Original content provided by Robert Middleton - Action Plan Marketing - www.actionplan.com