



QUESTION GENERATOR

INTRODUCTION

In the Pillar on Qualification I shared with you the seven questions, the meta questions, from which we can generate infinite sales questions. These sales questions all revolve around the essence of the meta question and can be used as effectively with clients and candidates.

In this document I will take each of the meta questions and generate a variety of questions that are born from knowing the meta question. For each I have left space for you to add your own to help you develop your own question combustion engine.

Getting good at asking questions will help you to develop your listening skills. It is important to remember – if you're not paying attention the power of the question can be lost. As you increase the quality of your question formation you will help your clients and candidates look deeper into their needs, wants, fears and desires and help them discover what is most important to them. As you coach them into buying mode (or higher levels of commitment to themselves to change) you will also make them easier for others to sell to. Imagine a high quality headhunt call or sales conversation with a prospect that gets them truly on board with the idea of change. You then decide to let them go, to think about it. Another agency steps in, far less competent as a sales professional they encounter someone in buying mode and close them. You did the hard work, you did the skilled piece. Please make sure to remember that you are doing this to lead to a committed close. So close them.

Jeremy

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

A fundamental question – there is a difference between want and need. I am asking what do you *want* rather than what do you *need*. A need is an outcome that has been identified by someone thinking about what they want, to then scope out a solution.

e.g.

WANT

I want to feel secure in my job and enjoy working with the people I've come to know and trust

NEED

I should stay where I am as it is safer than risking change. I don't need to talk to recruiters as I am happy where I am.

In the above example this individual has decided they're not looking as their want is being met. Could this want be met in greater abundance elsewhere? Could there be other wants that aren't being met that are being accepted as "not possible"?

There is a question stack that is used by CBT practitioners and life coaches called the 5 why stack. When you ask someone what they want – it can take up to 5 whys to get to the root of what the person really wants.

e.g.

What do you want?

I'd like to earn more money

Why?

So that I feel more comfortable and secure

Why?

To give me time to enjoy other things without always worrying about the future

Why?

I want to be able to spend more time with my family and enjoy being together

Why?

Because time goes by really quickly and I could miss out on seeing my children grow up

Why?

I want to be remembered as being a good father

Well, that got deep.

At a base level, the person in the example above wants to be a good father (want) and has decided the strategy to achieve this is to earn more money (need).

I am not advocating using the full 5 why stack with your candidates and clients every time. I don't need to necessarily know that my candidate is worried about being seen as a good father by their children to help them secure the right role. I do, however, need to have dug deeper into the why stack than writing down "wants a pay rise". When we know why (family, security, comfort) we could start to share other routes to achieve this without having to get a payrise and therefore change jobs, achieve your wants and be happier.

Now that you've read this, I trust you can see that what we **want** and what we decide we **need** are two different things linked by a strategy we decide is the best route to success. When we provide more choice the other person now has an opportunity to pick the best strategy rather than the first strategy they came up with.

So...back to recruitment. A job being taken from a client:

What do you want?

I want a credit controller who has experience of debt recovery in a high volume low transaction environment, ideally a retail or hospitality background.

What makes it necessary that they need to come from that background?

I need someone who can be firm with pub landlords and restaurant owners to collect debts when they are likely to have a list of creditors who also want to be paid.

For what reason does that require previous industry experience?

Because they can be difficult to get hold of, slippery to deal with and often rude. I don't have time to train people and I can't keep hiring people for them to leave in the first month.

What stops you?

My own business needs to collect cash and without it we in turn can't pay our own creditors. I want to know we can reduce the percentage of bad debt and decrease our aged debt from over £1m to below £250k.

Notice that I rarely use the word **WHY** in my questions. Why questions people at their core as to their decision making skills.
"What reason" out trumps **"why"**.

I'm going to pause. After each question I have asked in this example, the client has revealed more and more reasons as to why they want to hire a credit controller. These become the levers and drivers I will use to get them to move quickly and make an offer. I will also throw these back as evidence for hiring a good (senior) temp to set credit policy and review the current credit risk. A need that they had not identified that becomes more apparent to both of us as we dig into the real drivers (wants).

This requires two things to make it come to life:

1. Willingness to slow down and ask more questions (specifically related to the first question)

2. Co-operation from the other person – this is achieved either through generating rapport and empathy or setting frames as to why you need to discover this information. As a skill set this is one that will provide you a lifetime of benefit. Powerful questions help in almost every human interaction. It goes back to the classic book – The seven habits of highly effective people in which Steven Covey lays out the habit “Seek to Understand”. In his words, most of us tend to listen to respond rather than listen to understand. Join the elite brigade of genuine listeners who help others truly understand what they want.

Back to the seven questions:

- What do you want?
- Why is that so important?
- What could stop you?
- How will you know?
- What would happen if you didn't?
- Who else will this affect?
- If this, then that?

I have put together a PDF for each of the seven questions with examples and derivatives of the meta question and space for you to create your own ideas. Be flexible and have fun with these questions. They could change your life.

EXAMPLES: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Talk me through what you are currently looking for?

What could a good hire do for you and the team?

What do you believe someone with five years' experience can do that someone with three can't?

What does a successful hiring process look like to you?

What do you consider to be the benefits of hiring on a temp to perm basis?

What do you think calling three agencies with a job will give you that one cannot provide?

What are your goals for the next two years regarding hiring and talent management?

Why do you need to hire someone with all of those skills?

What would do differently if you owned a recruitment agency to make the experience better?

What are you looking for in your next role?

What are the benefits of working for a larger company, in your opinion?

What are your career goals?

What made you decide to become a career contractor?

What do you look for in an employer, Post CV19?

Why is WFH flexibility something you've decided you need?

What has made you feel that staying with your current employer is potentially the right choice?

QUESTION: WHY IS THAT SO IMPORTANT?

When we investigate importance we are understanding the true values and beliefs the other person has about the subject in question. We are taking someone on a journey where we are discovering the benefits they get, the assurance it provides and ultimately the reasons why they do what they do. It is important we seek to understand why these things are so important to them. If we elect to change their mind without understanding it we will rarely succeed.

e.g. “We always advertise our vacancies”

At this point a large number of recruiters would begin a sell. Comparing how they find people to the traditional advertising route. It might be they ask a question about ‘where?’ they advertise. It is important more time is spent understanding the prospects thought processes and beliefs.

The recruiter who understands this uses the meta question “**Why is that so important**” as the wireframe for their conversation:

Recruiter: “That’s interesting, I do a lot of advertising too. What makes advertising so important for you?”

Prospect: “It gives us greater control over the process, we can review a larger group of CVs and it could be we see people who could be useful for the future. Our brand is important to us and we want to be seen in the market and advertising helps us achieve that.”

Recruiter: “Sounds well thought out. Would it be fair to say that control and your brand are important things for you to develop?”

Prospect: “Definitely.”

Now the recruiter understands why it is so important for the client to advertise it can become a journey to educate how working with the right partner, on the right vacancies can help do that. An education to help achieve the goals of control and brand in more abundance.

EXAMPLES: WHY IS THAT SO IMPORTANT?

What makes that so important to you and the business?

Which is more important to you, the rate you pay or the quality of the candidate?

What is the benefit of a five stage interview process to you and the business?

What is the reason you prefer to advertise first before giving it to agencies?

What do you think you sacrifice when you expect agencies to work at 15%?

What do you feel you get from hiring someone temp to perm that you can't achieve hiring permanently immediately?

What makes you feel advertising directly will be more effective?

What benefits do you get from hiring through your own network?

QUESTION: WHAT COULD STOP YOU?

There are many times in the life of a recruitment consultant when we want to make sure that the path to what has been agreed looks clear. Finding roadblocks and potential stumbling blocks early can help us to navigate or even negate them. This question is really powerful as it gets the other person to play things out with more certainty in their mind to then look for any potential barriers. Dealing with these before we get there is highly proactive. The answers to the question “What is that so important” provides the catalyst to deal with the roadblock.

e.g.

“Why is it so important you find another job?”

“If I don’t find something soon then I am going to start to find it more and more difficult to pay my bills and I’m going to have to reconsider my finances. I am also worried the longer I have been out of work the less likely it is someone will hire me.”

“What could stop you from getting a new job?”

“Others I am competing against who have more recent experience, companies looking to hire someone potentially younger, I’m over 50 and aren’t getting any younger. I’m not very good at interviews and I worry I’m not going to be able to get through the process”

So – there’s a lot going on in this candidate’s head. More than “you’ll be fine” is going to fix. Now we can give some advice, coaching and guidance to help them deal with the potential barriers now and help get them back out to work quickly.

EXAMPLES: WHAT COULD STOP YOU?

What do you think could stop you from finding the right person?

What stops you from paying more than 15%?

What could stop you from getting sign off to hire a temp?

What could your employer do to stop you from leaving?

What could stop you from getting that bonus?

What could stop you from updating your CV tonight with those achievements?

What could stop you getting back to me with feedback on those CVs today?

What could stop you from getting authority to use an agency?

What could prevent you from reviewing the spec and increasing the salary?

What barriers do you see to launching your new product this year?

What else is competing for this budget?

Who else is being considered for the internal position?

QUESTION: HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

It's such a useful question to discover the evidence a person would need to know they've achieved something. Think about you as a consultant in recruitment. How will you know when you've succeeded in your career?

When we talk to people about how they calibrate and measure things we can help them to find other tools to help them do it and help them see it when they have!

Imagine a client is giving you a job – you know that there is going to be good people for it as the role sounds attractive. Given the amount of choice you could provide, it is important to understand how the client is going to know when they have found the right person.

“When you look at CVs, **how will you know** that you'd want to interview them?”

“During an interview, **how will you know** with certainty that they can do the job?”

“**How will you know** when you've found the right person?”

All of the above is a roadmap to help you to ensure you deliver the right candidates that will get through the sequence of gates that is the client's decision process. If the decision process is flawed you also have the opportunity to look at other ways to calibrate a candidates suitability and capability.

EXAMPLES: HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

How do you decide what you're going to hire each quarter?

How do you know which agency to call with which job?

How do you choose a good agency?

How do you know when you've met the right candidate?

How do you know, based upon a job description, if it's going to be right for you?

How do you know there isn't a better job out there for you if you haven't looked?

How do you know when you are doing a good job?

How do you know when your team are doing a good job?

How do you keep up to date with changes in the job market?

How do you know your adverts are attracting the best people?

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DIDN'T?

A question that can force people to think about the consequences of failure. When you ask a client or candidate to do this it can add extra momentum for them to want to achieve the goal. I have heard people answer this question with “It doesn’t bear thinking about” telling me a lot about the fact they need to think about it so that they avoid the costly mistake of failure! We also want to challenge people to think about what would happen if they didn’t follow the ‘usual’ path. Often, the answer is nothing.

The more certain someone is that an event would happen, the less they tend to think about failure. Often this can prevent them from having a contingency plan in place. Think how certain so many companies are that their advert will fill it, that the six interviews they have booked mean it’s a done deal or the PSL has never let them down.

You can be quite playful with this question, as although it is direct you can soften it with inflection and presupposition:

“I know you’ve hired so many times through your own network that it’s proven to be a really good route to hiring, I’m curious to know though, **what would happen if you didn’t** find someone?”

EXAMPLES: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DIDN'T?

What would happen if you didn't fill it?

What would happen if you failed to hire on time?

What would happen if you didn't have to review so many CVs?

What would happen if you didn't use the PSL for this position?

What would happen if the temp you have hired didn't stay?

What would happen if the interview process was cut from 3 to 2 stages?

What would happen if the contractor could get it done even quicker?

What would happen if you didn't reduce your attrition?

What would happen if you didn't reduce your spend?

What would happen if you didn't reduce the number of suppliers?

What would happen if you didn't get the promotion?

What would happen if you didn't get the job?

What would happen if they didn't offer you permanent?

What would happen if they didn't make you redundant?

QUESTION: WHO ELSE WILL THIS AFFECT?

A considerate question to get people to think about the entire ecology of a decision. Not enough consultants ask this question – yet the reason why people don't get hired, or people don't take jobs is because of the impact it could have on others. This ecology test isn't always done until the final decision. The earlier the ecology test, the more time there is to come to terms with it or change it. It also makes it easier to step away and walk away as it is such early stages of the process.

Recruiter: “If you were to take this role and had to stay away from home five nights a week, who else will it affect?”

Candidate: “It would potentially impact on my partner, she works full time and we'd only get to see each other at weekends. I'm sure she would be fine with it”

Red flagging here suggested by the fact they haven't spoken about it indicating a lack of certainty it is right, delaying a difficult conversation (that will only get more difficult) or an admission that although the job is great perhaps the situation will be too difficult to deal with. Consultant digs deeper –

Recruiter: “Who else could it affect?”

Candidate: “The kids are quite young so I don't get to see them in the evening anyway so I imagine it will be very little change for them either”

More red flags. Consultant deploys another of the meta questions:

“**What could stop you** having a sit down with your family tonight to talk about the pros and cons and to ensure everyone can ask questions and understand what could happen”

Power questions in action. Then, to close the loop:

“**What would happen** if you didn't and you got offered the job and needed to give them an answer within 24 hours?”

EXAMPLES: WHO ELSE COULD IT AFFECT?

Who else is involved in the hiring process?

Who is going to work with this person day to day?

Who makes the final decision as to who gets hired?

If you hire the wrong person, who would this affect?

Who is doing the job right now?

Who could benefit from hiring the right person?

If you get the job, who else will it affect?

What could be the impact on the family if you were to secure this role?

What impact could a payrise have on your household?

What impact would all of the travel have on you and your family?

Who would be affected by your commute?

QUESTION: IF THIS, THEN THAT?

The classic cause and effect question. By proposing an input and an output we can trial close our clients and candidates and test their commitment to agreement. This is a great way to test without creating full commitment. As we test things we are calibrating the answers – what is said, what isn't and how it is said.

An easy to use question model that will help you to close more deals and develop your negotiation skills (If you haven't watched the pillar on negotiation, make sure you do – it's a real winner)

EXAMPLES: IF THIS, THEN THAT?

If I could find a temp who could do this, could you take them on from tomorrow?

If I could find you three people to interview, could you do it this week?

If I offered you a discount of 1%, would you be able to make a decision this week?

If I could show you how I've helped other businesses deal with that problem, would you work with me?

If I could find you someone with those skills, would you pay me 30%?

If I emailed my terms now, could you sign and return by 4pm?

If I could show you how to reduce that risk, would you commit to me as your only agency?

If I could get you an interview on that job, would you take half a day off?