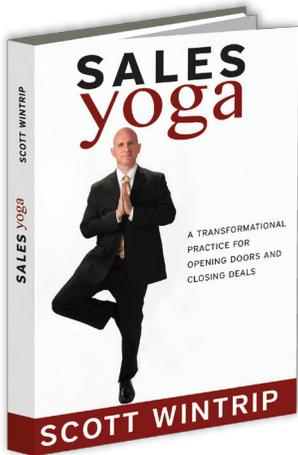


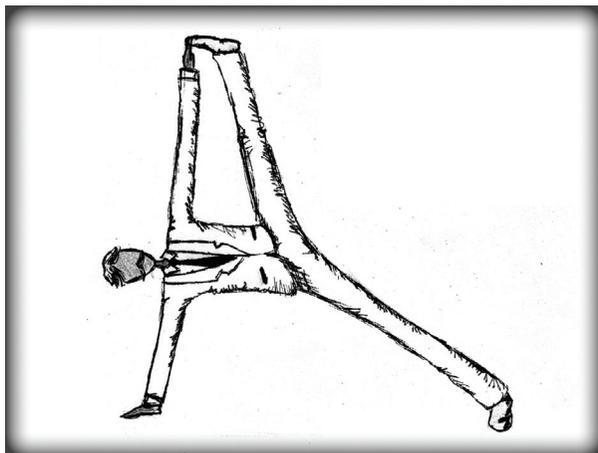
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# SALES yoga



**A Transformational Practice for  
Opening Doors and Closing Deals**

by Scott Wintrip



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## **Chapter 20:**

# **Provocative Launching Questions Pay Off**

*“To seduce almost anyone, ask for and listen to his opinions.”*

*– Malcolm Forbes*

Sue, an experienced sales pro, had been contacting Jerry for several months, yet Jerry wouldn't give her the time of day.

It was driving her crazy. She knew Jerry was doing business with her competitor. She also knew her company could provide better options; but without an open line of communication, she would never have a chance to earn Jerry's trust or his account.

Week after week, Sue would call. Most of the time, she left a voice

message that was never returned. A couple times, Jerry actually answered the phone. She quickly introduced herself and asked for a short meeting. Both times, Jerry said, “No thanks.”

It was tempting to point out in her voice messages all the things her company did better than the competition. She knew, though, that a one-way sales pitch (or a sales dump as a colleague calls it) would make Jerry less likely to respond, so she resisted that urge and stayed focused on gaining an in-person meeting. Sue knew, especially in this instance, that a face-to-face meeting was the best way to form a mutually rewarding working relationship.

Much to her (pleasant) surprise, Jerry finally said, “Yes.”

“Sue, I am impressed with your persistence. I respect that you’re trying to win me over. I’m pretty happy with whom we work with now, but I’ll tell you what...if you come in, I’ll give you 10 minutes.”

Sue set up the meeting. She was ecstatic to finally have the face-to-face appointment she’d been waiting for, and working for. As soon as she hung up the phone with Jerry, she called me. “Scott, you’ve been teaching me to use Attractive Persistence and it has finally paid off. Thank you! If you hadn’t been advising me to keep at it, I would have given up a long time ago and this

never would have happened.” I told her, “See what I mean? Jerry wasn’t annoyed by your

persistence; he was impressed. As long as you’re consistent and respectful when you follow up with potential clients, they often end up appreciating it.”

Sue said, “The question now is: How do I convince Jerry to work with us instead of our competitor? He’s made it clear he likes them. What do I do?”

“Well, the way I see it, he’s working with them now because he doesn’t know his company needs you yet. The good news is, you know your products and services are better. Let’s focus on helping him to convince himself to work with you instead of them.”

“But I’ve only got 10 minutes. How can I possibly close this deal in 10 minutes?”

“Sue, you don’t have 10 minutes and you’re not going to try to ‘close this deal.’ Researchers believe we only have nine seconds to capture people’s attention. That means you’ve got to engage Jerry with the first thing you say, before his attention wanders and you become ‘just another salesperson.’

“This is one of the reasons Sales Yoga works so well. Sales Yoga is always about what engages the buyer. What does your buyer need? What do they want? What problems does his company have that you can solve?

“Ask yourself, ‘What matters to Jerry?’ You’re not going to pitch. You’re going to ask short, nine-second or less, provocative Launching Questions to engage him from the get-go. What will make them provocative is not just their brevity, but their ability to get him to think more deeply.”

Sue and I strategized a variety of provocative Launching Questions she could ask that would be relevant for Jerry. I also emphasized that she was given 10 minutes, and 10 minutes only, and that it was crucial for her to work within that time limit.

I told Sue, “Running long is one of the quickest ways to offend people and lose trust because it’s a form of arrogance. It tells people you can’t be counted on to keep commitments; that you primarily care about what you want, not what they want.”

Sue agreed to interrupt herself, mid-sentence if necessary, to honor her time agreement. We then rehearsed a “mock meeting” so Sue would be comfortable walking into Jerry’s office. We didn’t want her to be robotic or nervous. We wanted her to be well prepared so she could relax, think on her feet and exude a warm confidence.

The next week Sue arrived early at Jerry’s gleaming glass tower office building so she’d have time to compose herself instead of feeling rushed. She looked around appreciatively at the impressive lobby, gleaming mahogany doors and luxurious furniture. Instead of feeling intimidated, she sat in a comfortable chair in a private corner of the lobby and did some discrete deep yogic breathing exercises we had practiced together.

Within a few minutes, she felt calm, centered and raring to go. She walked into her meeting a minute early, confidently shook Jerry’s hand,

exchanged “Nice to meet you’s,” and jumped in to her first provocative Launching Question, “Jerry, under what circumstances would you consider a different provider?”

Jerry thought for a minute and then offered his answer. Sue listened carefully and integrated his response into her next question to give him an opportunity to expand upon what he’d just said. Each time he spoke, she responded with a question that mined his comments and helped him explain what he meant more clearly and deeply.

Right before her allotted time was up, Sue kept her promise. She interrupted herself and said, “Jerry, you made it clear I had 10 minutes of your time....”

Jerry came back with, “Sue, don’t worry about that. I want to keep going.” He enthusiastically described his company’s challenges for another half hour, and didn’t stop until his secretary knocked on his door to remind him of his next appointment.

He looked at Sue a bit sheepishly and confessed, “To tell you the truth, Sue, when I gave you 10 minutes, it was more of a courtesy than anything else. I really didn’t think we needed to make a change, but you’ve proven you’re different. You’ve shown more of an understanding of our needs in this short meeting than some of my current providers have in years. You know what? I’m going to give you a shot.”

Sue left that meeting thrilled, and called me to celebrate her good news. “This is incredible. Those provocative Launching Questions worked!”

“Sue, of course they worked! First, you centered yourself with that yogic breathing so you were focused instead of frazzled. Then, you made the conversation about him and his needs instead of it being about you ‘trying to close a deal.’”

What Sue learned was this: When Jerry had given her a brief 10 minutes to talk, he was really indicating he only had that much time and tolerance to listen to her. He thought she’d be doing the talking and he’d be doing the listening.

Instead, she did just the opposite.

When Jerry had a chance to do the talking and Sue was the one doing

the listening, he suddenly had all the time in the world. By giving him a chance to go deep into his company's needs, he was able to expound on what they wanted in a way he never had before. Sue's willingness to listen instead of lecture won him over.

The point?

## **People don't want to be talked at. They want to be listened to.**

People don't want to be "pitched," they want to be engaged. And, one of the best ways to engage people (especially ones who are already buying from a competitor) is by asking a provocative Launching Question such as, "Under what circumstances would you consider another provider?" or, "How could we make you happier?" and then listening carefully to what's being said and integrating that into follow-up questions. When you do this, you give prospects a chance to identify needs that aren't being met and problems that aren't being solved.

Another bonus is that, instead of being satisfied with the status quo, provocative Launching Questions help prospective clients explore and articulate better options they haven't even considered.

Furthermore, a series of provocative Launching Questions combined with attentive listening keeps the focus on your prospects, which keeps them engaged from start to finish.

Think about it. How long has it been since someone has given you an opportunity to go deep into how you feel about an issue? How long has it been since someone focused solely on what you wanted, what you needed, what you thought? How long has it been since someone asked thought-provoking questions that caused you to re-examine your thinking and arrive at new conclusions that improved your circumstances?

It is extremely rare, which makes it extremely welcome.

That is why short, provocative questions, combined with deep listening and integrative follow-up, is one of the best things you can do to make

people feel important and understood, and it's one of the best things you can do to turn coercion into collaboration.

Remember, the longer you talk, the more people tune out. Replace pitches (one-way communication) with provocative Launching Questions (two-way communication) if you want to genuinely engage people and capture their interest.

And remember what we learned from Sue and Jerry's story. Consistent, respectful, attractive persistence pays off. Taking a few moments to do deep yogic breathing before an important meeting pays off. Asking provocative Launching Questions and listening carefully pays off. Giving prospects your full focus pays off. And giving people an opportunity to go deep and identify unmet needs your company can address better than their current provider pays off too...for you and for your new client.

## Action Plan for Chapter 20

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

*– Anthony Robbins*

During your next sales call or meeting, transform your approach from a one-way pitch to a two-way conversation by using provocative *Launching Questions*.

Remember to listen intently to the needs that are being articulated so you can integrate that into your next question and help people uncover what their organization wants but doesn't currently have.

Your first provocative *Launching Question* can be similar to the one Sue used with Jerry, "Under what circumstances would you consider another provider?"

Sample topics for additional Launching Questions include:

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- **General inquiry**  
How can I help right now?
  - **Budget cuts/adjustments**  
How are recent budget cuts affecting your department?
  - **Industry trends and disruptions**  
Which industry trends are impacting you the most?
  - **Outsourcing vs. insourcing**  
What would happen if you implemented insourcing?
  - **Collapsed/condensed time frames**  
How would a condensed production schedule improve product turnaround?
  - **Price vs. value**  
Under what circumstances would value have more impact than price?
  - **Personnel needs**  
Where are your personnel needs the greatest? How is that impacting productivity?
  - **Changes in operational procedures or policies**  
In what ways have policy changes transformed your business model?
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