



# How to use the magic of questions and get more buyers to say yes...

Wouldn't it be great if more buyers said yes more often to your proposal, your offer, and your products?

It's disappointing, disheartening and discouraging when you get a warm prospect for your product, or service and they don't buy. Even more so when you know it's right for them!

Here's a bitesize business breakthrough you can start implementing today and get more 'yes' answers, more sales and more profit as a result.

## In a nutshell

When you ask prospective customers smarter questions, in a smarter way, you'll improve your sales results.

Questions are something we all take for granted. And yet we have not been taught this essential skill for business – a skill to transform your relationship building, your conversations, your results.

Let me explain...

Asking the best questions, in the best way and at the best time has huge potential for changing the results you achieve.

- Better questions improve the way people



- respond to you and your proposal
- Better questions change the way your customers think, feel and behave
- Better questions better influence the decisions people make – in your favour

## Time for a question...

...if you agree with the 'better question' idea what should you do now? Read on and discover some essential insights into asking better questions, in a better way.

## Here's a proven solution for you...

The decisions that people make are directly influenced by the questions you ask.

Magic happens when you master the simple science of asking great questions.

As accountants we love numbers but we can see the magic in six masterly words of the English language – aptly described by Rudyard Kipling in his tale of 'The Elephant's Child':

*"I keep six honest serving-men*

*(They taught me all I knew);*

*Their names are What and Why and When*

*And How and Where and Who."*

So, why are these six words the most valuable in the English language?

**Great questions give you control of a conversation...**

Kipling's six serving men are the keys to the control, the influence and the results you seek.

**Let's start with 'yes-tag' questions...**



Notice that when asking 'why' questions early in your discussion, you sound aggressive. Yes?

When used too soon, 'why' questions can make your buyer feel wrong-footed, invaded, even assaulted! You can reduce your sales success by asking 'why' questions too early.

Similar questions, asked as a 'how', change the tone and reduce the aggression of the question a little:

***"How did you come to choose brand X?"***

The aggression is toned down even further when you use well-crafted 'what' questions:

***"What is it that appeals to you most about brand X?"***

Less sensitive questions help build rapport, demonstrate your interest and build trust too. Ask the more direct 'why' questions later.

**When used too soon, 'why' questions can make your buyer feel wrong-footed, invaded, even assaulted!**

### Making it easier for you to ask great questions

When you're stuck, use a two-word phrase that enables your brain to access the power of Kipling's six honest serving men.

Here it is:

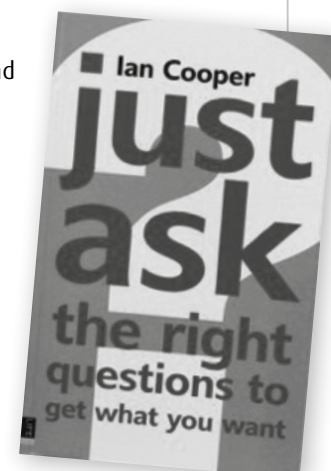
***"Tell me..."***

Tell me, what do you think has been most valuable so far in this edition of Business Bitesize?

### Tell me more...

Hopefully this Business Bitesize has tempted you to make more of better questions. If you want to look more into the secrets of great questions, you'll find Ian Cooper's massively helpful book - Just Ask - gives you a fantastic next step.

On page 99 you'll find a brilliant little closed question - "Would it be helpful if...?" - and how it can help your customer conversations.



Why ask a yes-tag question? Not surprisingly, to get a yes! For example:

*"When you master the science of great questions, can you see you'll create better conversations, better results?"*

The tag-along answer to such a question is mostly yes. So when should you use yes-tag questions?

Yes-tag questions are brilliant at the start of a conversation, helping you create a positive mind-set in your buyer. Have a look at the first question at the start of this Business Bitesize edition:

***"Wouldn't it be great if more buyers said yes more often to your proposal, your offer, your products?"***

Hard to say anything other than a yes, don't you think?!

This first question puts you in a positive frame of mind ready for the rest of the report.

Yes-tag questions enable you to magically open a conversation positively.

### Two fundamental types of question:

Yes-tags are a type of closed question. Kipling's six serving men are all open questions.

Why does this matter?

A **closed** question typically gets you a yes or no answer, a decision.

For example:

***"Would you like a red one?"***

'Yes', 'no' and 'maybe' are the only answers.

### Here's a stronger closed question for you:

It's stronger because buyers appreciate being given choices:

***"Would you prefer a red one or a blue one?"***

Such closed questions provide buyers with alternative choices. And both choices mean you win!

### Open questions deliver all the information you need

*"What colour would you prefer?"* or

*"How important is the colour to you?"*

...or an even more open question:

***"In what way does the colour make a difference to you?"***

When open questions are answered you become more knowledgeable, and you can tailor your offer to your customer.

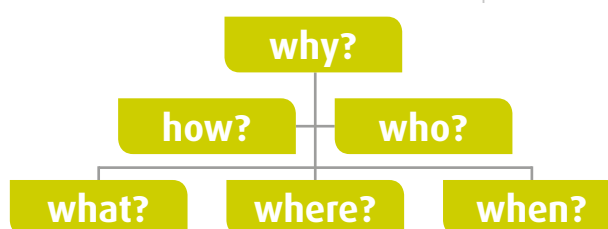
Open questions also prove to your customer that you are genuinely interested in them - influencing them to choose you and your offer.

### It pays to know which open questions are more potent than others...

You have 3 levels of question power and sensitivity at your disposal.

Imagine you are sitting in front of an interested buyer. They are in the market for your product or service. You start with some straight-to-the-point 'why' questions:

***"Why have you bought brand X rather than our product up until now?"***



Question sensitivity hierarchy

## TIME TO DISAGREE

**“Conversation should be natural. I don’t want to be seen to be manipulating a discussion with scripted questions.”**

Like the old adage goes: “Preparation and planning prevents particularly poor performance.” This applies to our accountancy business just as it applies to your business too. So...

For every question you ask without thinking, it’s more than likely you’ll ask a better question when you prepare it well.

A great exercise to do in a team is build a list of 20+ open questions you could use. Decide on the strongest 7 from these 20, and then the top 3 of the 7.

We heard of an upholstery company director who used his 20-question list to prepare for an important prospective customer meeting. As a result he won a £120,000 contract for the Celtic Manor resort hotel in Newport, Wales.

**Use the Business Bitesize support tools to help you put the 20 questions to work for you.**

You’ll find suggestions, ideas and exercises to help you and your team become wizards at using better questions. You’ll find our support tools on our Business Bitesize web page – see speech bubble below for the website.

### Use the Business Bitesize Support Tools And Resources

to help you make the most of this edition of Business Bitesize – go here: [www.businessbitesize.com/cedar\\_and\\_co](http://www.businessbitesize.com/cedar_and_co)

**Your feedback is important to us.** We’d love to know what you think of this edition of Business Bitesize and how you use it or plan to use it. Also we’d welcome your suggestions for future editions of Business Bitesize. To give us your thoughts please use the simple feedback form here: [www.businessbitesize.com/cedar\\_and\\_co](http://www.businessbitesize.com/cedar_and_co)

## IT’S HARD TO PREDICT HOW A CONVERSATION WILL GO

**“Preparing questions is self-defeating because all conversations are unique and cannot be prepared for.”**

Conversations are like snowflakes – they are unique and yet there are also recognisable patterns.

Preparing your best 20, best 7 and best 3 questions can help you make the most of these patterns.

Great questions can also make it easier for your people too. One great closed question to use at the end of meetings can signpost the next discussion brilliantly:

“Do you now know enough to make your decision?”

**If they say yes, you can help them buy.**

**If they say no, you can ask them what else they need to know.**

By using the word ‘enough’ in this question you give the buyer an opportunity to tell you how close they are to saying ‘yes’ to you (without asking a closed question and running the risk of getting a ‘no’). See how well-scripted questions can help you?

## IT’LL BE TOO HARD TO GET MY PEOPLE TO APPLY THE SCIENCE OF QUESTIONS

**“Changing the behaviour of my people is a tough task”**

Every one of your people uses questions now. And every one of your people gets out of bed in the morning to succeed rather than fail. Help them succeed using a series of ‘short sharp question sessions’ looking at generating smarter questions together. Use the support tools on our Business Bitesize webpage to help you do this.



# 4 helping hands for you...

Well-crafted questions massively improve your conversations with buyers. Put the different types of questions to work for you:

- 1. Use ‘yes-tag’ questions to open conversations positively**
- 2. Use open questions to better gather information**
- 3. Use the phrase “Tell me...” to help you build the question habit**
- 4. Use ‘why’ questions sensitively to avoid alienating buyers**

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT: “How do I know this will work for me and my business?”

Like anything else in business – you don’t know until you try. Test it! Choose a typical customer scenario and generate 20 questions you might use. Then identify the best 7 and then the best 3.

**STOP:** taking questions for granted, or you’ll never achieve your full sales potential.

**START:** capturing your 20 best customer questions with your team’s help if you can. Then fine-tune these questions and test using them with your customers.



## Your next steps:

Here's your bitesize checklist for producing top-quality questions to help you convert more sales for your business.

## Start with an example:

Choose a recognisable, regular, predictable buyer conversation. A conversation you, and some of your team, are familiar with. Then use this checklist to generate a series of questions you can use to make these conversations work better for you and your business.

## How well do you measure up?

Use the question creator provided in the Business Bitesize tools we've created for you – you'll find the tools using the link in the footer below.

# Create well-crafted questions

## 1. Generate 20 open questions

Kick-start your question creativity using Kipling's six-honest serving men – What – Where – When – How – Who – Why. Generate at least 20 questions starting with these six words.

## 2. Work out carefully worded yes-tag questions

You want to start your buyer conversation well by putting your buyer in a positive frame of mind. Work out carefully crafted yes-tag questions to do this.

## 3. Give your buyer choices

Work out choices for your buyer at the end of your conversation. Generate alternatives you can use in a closed question that allows your buyer to choose – "Would you prefer a red one or a blue one?" – "Do you want delivery next week, or the week after?"

## 4. Practice using your 'get out of jail' phrase

When the conversation with your buyer does not follow your planning, fall back on the phrase, "Tell me..." to trigger asking a strong open question. Practising the use of "Tell me..." will build this simple but powerful questioning skill.

## 5. One of the oldest questions around

Losing control of a conversation happens when a buyer starts asking all the questions. To resolve this, practice answering a question with a question. Work with your team to generate a list of questions buyers often ask so you can craft answers or questions you can reply with.

**Go on then... make well-crafted questions work for you and have more buyers say yes more often to your proposal, your offer, your products. And why not pass this on to a friend or colleague so they can put it to work successfully for their business?**

**Find the support tools to help you here - [www.businessbitesize.com/cedar\\_and\\_co](http://www.businessbitesize.com/cedar_and_co)**



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