

# Questioning skills

Great customer service starts with a sincere and warm welcome. This makes the customer feel at ease and shows that you are approachable and available to serve them.

Asking the customer the right questions at the right time and listening to their responses will ensure that you obtain a thorough picture of what the customer is looking for. This will allow you an opportunity to summarise what you have heard and clarify any outstanding points to check your understanding.

Customer confidence will increase knowing that you have understood and acknowledged their requirements, avoiding any possible confusion. Being able to establish what the customer wants will allow you to offer the customer the best possible help, advice and service in order to fully meet their needs.

With the addition of B&Q Spaces we also need to consider what are the new questions that help customers to buy using this brilliant new system?

## Framing the conversation

One of the most important factors to remember when asking customer questions is proper positioning by gaining the customers permission. Framing the conversation allows you to explain to the customer that you are going to ask them some questions so that you can fully understand their needs. This lets them know "what's in it for them" to answer the questions, in advance!

For example:

*"Okay Mrs Smith, I'm going to ask you some questions about what you like and dislike about your existing bathroom so that I can give you the best possible help and advice."*

With B&Q Spaces that may become:

*'Ok Mrs Smith, in order to set you up with your first project I need to ask a few questions that will help me create the room and get you going with the different combinations...'*



## Types of questions

Once you have approached the customer it is your responsibility to establish their needs in a really helpful way. There are five types of questions used to gather information from customers; open, probing, leading, multiple choice and closed. Knowing which question type and when to use them will help you to gather valuable information from the customer by encouraging them to share their ideas, wants, needs and aspirations' with you in a natural and engaging way.

The table shown on the next page provides examples of questions and appropriate times to use them.

**Remember:** Being able to confidently interact and listen to our customers needs will show that we care and will help us to build lasting relationships. View the Building Rapport DIY Learning for further information.

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# HOW TO...

Question Types	When to use	When to avoid
<b>Open Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Using the 5 W's method (who, what, when, where, why and how) allows you to obtain more details relating to a customers needs</li> <li>■ Encourages a two way conversation which requires a longer answer than just yes or no</li> <li>■ Asks the customer to talk about their knowledge, issues, options or feelings</li> <li>■ In addition 'T.E.D' questions 'Tell me', 'Explain' and 'Describe' are also very useful open questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When you want the customer to clarify their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When the customer has made their decision and</li> <li>■ You want to close the sale</li> </ul>
<b>Probing Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Allows the customer to give a specific example for clarity to check your understanding</li> <li>■ By using the 5 W's and including the word 'specific or exactly' as this will help the customer to describe their thoughts in more detail such as: "What specific make and model are you looking for?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When you want to learn more and identify more specific details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When the customer has made their decision and you want to close the sale</li> </ul>
<b>Leading Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leading questions are worded in such a way that suggests the desired answer and tend to be closed questions.</li> <li>■ Can help to get the answer you want but leaving the customer feeling that they have had a choice.</li> <li>■ Helps to close a sale: "If that answers all of your questions, shall we agree a price?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Try to change leading questions to open questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ At all times as the customer may feel manipulated</li> </ul>
<b>Multiple Choice Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provides the customer with a choice between two or more options, both of which are suitable but will encourage a preference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When the customer wants to understand the options available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When the customer has made their decision and you want to close the sale</li> </ul>
<b>Closed Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Confirms understanding and obtains one word answers to clarify facts</li> <li>■ Allows you to confirm agreement, concludes a discussion and to make a decision</li> <li>■ A misplaced closed question, on the other hand, can kill the conversation and lead to awkward silences, so are best avoided when a conversation is in full flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When you want the customer to make a decision and close the sale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ When you want the customer to open up</li> </ul>

## Listening

During the course of any conversation let the person know that you are actively listening by showing a response to what has been said. Signs of active listening include eye contact, nodding, small facial expressions and the occasional echoing of the customer words. The more you look like you are listening, the more you will be listening. Listening requires effort combined with a real honest desire to understand, so focus and concentrate and avoid having any distractions.

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## Summarising

A summary is an overview of the main points or ideas that have been discussed and allows the colleague and customer to review and agree the information exchanged between them up to that point in time.

Having asked the right questions and listened to the customer's responses it is always useful to summarise what you have heard to check your understanding. This will avoid confusion and will also demonstrate to the customer that you have listened, acknowledged and have fully understood their needs.

Example of summarising:

*"So, you need to increase the amount of base units and insert a display cabinet"*

*"I understand that you need to replace your kitchen cabinets and would like more information on our installation service"*

*"So, you would like oak doors with a granite worktop"*

When used effectively, summarising can help you to conclude the discussion and allow you to move the conversation on and agree the next steps.

## Questioning – the funnel effect

There are 3 steps involved in 'The Funnel Effect'

1. Start at the mouth of the funnel with open questions about the subject at hand, this will give you all the information you require to take the conversation further.
2. Use probing questions to dig a little deeper into the customers answers by finding out the reasons and emotions behind their responses.
3. Ask closed questions to confirm both your and the customer's understanding of what has been discussed.

**Remember:** Actively listen and summarise the information appropriately. View the following for an example of how to use the funnel effect.

## Timescales

What level of involvement would the customer like from B&Q KBBi experts?

How would they like to be contacted?

Do they understand how the 'Discussion's tab works?

How confident are they to use B&Q Spaces?

Which elements of their design are they unsure of that could require expert advice?

Are they clear on the live pricing and how it changes based on different selections and installation costs?

*"Make sure you have watched the training DVD for B&Q Spaces which illustrates the simple way to set up a B&Q Spaces project and get the customers excited about using this leading design software"*



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HOW TO...

"Note here any key points, especially store specific information"

Pass it on...

Lined area for notes, consisting of multiple horizontal dotted lines.