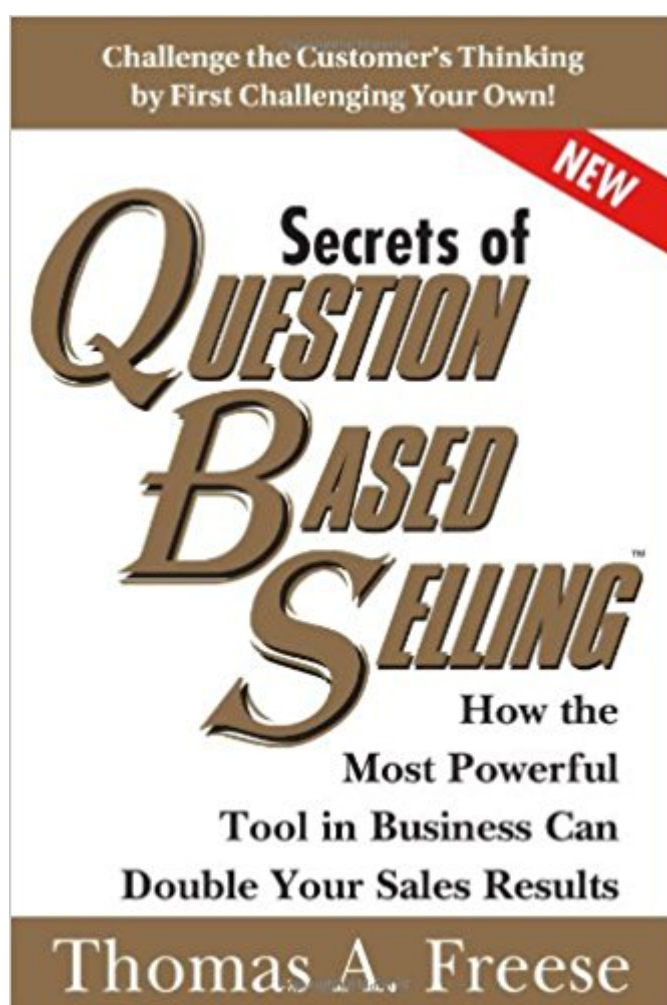


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# Secrets Of Question-Based Selling: How The Most Powerful Tool In Business Can Double Your Sales Results



## Synopsis

"After I sent my team to the Question Based Selling program, not only was the feedback from the training outstanding, but we experienced an immediate positive impact in results." — Jim Cusick, vice president of sales, SAP America, Inc. "Following the program, even our most experienced salespeople raved, saying QBS was the best sales training they have ever experienced!" — Alan D. Rohrer, director of sales, Hewlett Packard

For nearly fifteen years, The Secrets of Question Based Selling has been helping great salespeople live you deliver big results. It's commonsense approach has become a classic, must-have tool that demonstrates how asking the right questions at the right time accurately identifies your customer's needs. But consumer behavior and sales techniques change as rapidly as technology — and there are countless contradictory sales training programs promising results. Knowing where you should turn to for success can be confusing. Now fully revised and updated, The Secrets of Question Based Selling provides a step-by-step, easy-to-follow program that focuses specifically on sales effectiveness — identifying the strategies and techniques that will increase your probability of success. How you sell has become more important than the product. With this hands-on guide, you will learn to:

- Penetrate more accounts
- Overcome customer skepticism
- Establish more credibility sooner
- Generate more return calls
- Motivate different types of buyers
- Develop more internal champions
- Close more sales...faster
- And much, much more

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thomas A. Freese, based in Atlanta, is the founder and president of QBS Research, Inc., which teaches Question Based Selling to salespeople around the country. The list of the author's clients includes IBM, Merrill Lynch, Compaq Computer Corporation, Northwestern Mutual Life, Sun Microsystems, Lucent Technologies, Cisco, GE Capital and MCI. Freese speaks to dozens of major corporations annually.

Introduction THE "NEW" QUESTION BASED SELLING Selling has become increasingly more difficult. Prospects have less time...yet decision makers are on the receiving end of more sales calls than ever before. With a boom in the number of products being offered, "No" has become the standard customer response, and the vast majority of these calls end in rejection. This creates an interesting dilemma for salespeople and managers. When the risk of rejection is high, sales productivity tends to be very low. QBS reverses this trend by showing salespeople that the best way to increase their probability of success is to decrease their risk of failure. Since I published my first book (Secrets of Questions Based Selling) some thirteen years ago, the selling environment has changed-in some ways dramatically, while other changes are very subtle. That's the difference between my original book and this updated version, the new Secrets of Question Based Selling. Now that I have trained hundreds of sales teams over the last fifteen years, I've discovered the QBS methodology has evolved significantly from my first work. Not surprisingly, many of the base concepts still apply-things like the need to establish credibility, pique the customer's interest, and minimize your risk of failure-all of which are indeed timeless. But, my intention with this updated version of the book was to enhance those concepts by including many of the metaphors, anecdotes, and syllogisms that have made Question Based Selling the top-rated sales course that our clients have ever experienced. Ultimately, selling is a creative act-one that requires salespeople to go out into their respective markets and create business opportunities that otherwise wouldn't exist. This means knocking on unfamiliar doors. It also means picking up the telephone and calling new prospect accounts. Of course, once you get in, the focus changes from engagement to further developing the opportunity. This includes uncovering prospect needs, building value around your solutions, and securing the prospect's commitment to move forward. Sounds easy, doesn't it? It isn't. In fact, for most salespeople it's becoming increasingly difficult to secure a precious slice of the customer's time and attention, not to mention cracking into new prospect opportunities. I am perhaps the only author/trainer who is willing to come right out and state that there is a problem in the world of sales training-where it has become very unclear which sales programs are the most effective given all of the conflicting information floating around the marketplace. The positioning of

different sales training courses is crazy! While one program touts the value of "Getting to Yes," another program focuses on the value of "Getting to the No." So which is it? Should we be shooting for a "yes," or "no"? Similarly, consultative selling has become a common buzzword in training circles for some time now, but the interpretations of what "consultative selling" is runs the gamut from SPIN Selling, to Power Base Selling, Solution Selling, Target Account Selling, and Strategic Selling, each of which contradicts the next in one way or another. Trust me, I've been through all of these programs (and more) during my years as a sales rep and also as a manager. Knowing where to turn for success can be very confusing. The truth is, most of the sales training that has been delivered over the past twenty years has been process oriented. Don't get me wrong. Defining the steps of the sales process and having some sense of organizational consistency is important and necessary. Formalizing a sales process was particularly faddish back in the 1990s, which is when many of these programs really took off. What process training attempts to do, however, is define the steps of the sales process. For example, I just read an article written by an entrepreneur espousing the value of the five-step model that he learned while at Procter & Gamble. Step 1: Summarize the Situation. Step 2: State the Idea. Step 3: Explain It. Step 4: Discuss. Step 5: Close. The author of this article refers to this five-step regimented sales process as "brilliant." Other companies promote a slightly different sales process, where Step 1 is: "Identifying New Opportunities," followed by Step 2: "Qualify," Step 3: "Uncover Needs," Step 4: "Propose Solutions" ...and so on. Whichever model you settle on is immaterial from the QBS point of view. I say this because the steps are irrelevant. If you looked more closely at the reps using the Procter & Gamble model, you would very quickly notice that some of them were successful, while others continually struggled to keep their heads above water. If they are all using the same process model, why are their sales results so different? The difference between success and failure at most companies is not related to the brilliance of whoever outlined the steps of the sales process. The difference between success and failure is more closely related to the execution of the steps within the sales process. Therefore, instead of just redefining the sales process, what salespeople and managers really want to know is something else. They want to know how to identify more new opportunities? How to be more effective at qualifying new opportunities? How do you uncover more needs in order to give yourself an opportunity to provide more value? And, how can you close more sales faster? Question Based Selling very specifically focuses on sales effectiveness-identifying those strategies and techniques that will increase the salesperson's probability of success, while at the same time discarding whatever may reduce your risk of rejection. To me, success is about execution. Simply put, salespeople who are killing it are doing so because of their ability to successfully execute the

various steps of the sales process. On the flip side, sellers who are not executing effectively face a significant disadvantage. It's worth noting that the actual steps of the sales process are pretty consistent from company to company. Thus, just identifying the steps of the sale does not afford you any advantage over your competitors who have a similarly formalized sales process in place. How well are you executing each of these steps? That's a question only you can answer. But, I must tell you that I have yet to meet a salesperson who didn't want to take their game to the next level. With regard to QBS methodology, ask yourself this question: Why do companies all over the world spend millions of dollars telling salespeople what to say, but they invest almost nothing when it comes to teaching them what to ask? I still can't figure out why most of the sales training offered today is geared toward teaching people to sound the same as everyone else. Back when I was a fledgling salesperson, I tried to do everything in my power to differentiate myself from the competition, as opposed to commoditizing my company's value proposition with industry buzzwords. Today, the effectiveness of the individual salesperson has become more important than the products they sell or the company they represent. All you have to do is glance around your industry and you will see that some salespeople are more significantly more effective than others, even though they are selling the same types of products to the same target audience. Therefore, the real challenge sellers face is less about defining the steps of the sales process, and more to do with figuring out how to execute more effectively. Things like: How can you pique the prospect's interest to penetrate more new opportunities? How do you earn enough credibility to compete for mindshare from key decision makers within important target accounts? How can you create the sense of urgency needed to move deals forward? Or better still, how can you cause skeptical customers to "want to" share information with a salesperson they don't yet know or trust? As well as, how can you increase your "return on invested sales effort," enough to secure an "unfair" advantage over the competition? The goal of executing more effectively is ultimately about understanding how to close more deals, at higher margins, in reduced time, and with less effort.

**Secret #1** Effective execution is more important than just defining the steps of the sales process. Unfortunately, the sales profession in general has responded poorly to recent business trends. As prospects and customers have had to become more judicious with their time, salespeople have started pushing even harder to get a foot in the door. How do prospects respond to being pushed? Most push back in some way. When sellers call, some prospects get frustrated and hang up immediately. Others program their phones to roll directly into a voice-mail system, or they use caller ID to hold salespeople at arm's length. Invariably, that means the next salesperson who calls on the account will have to work even harder than the last. It also means they inherit the negative baggage

created by all the previous callers. When you combine reluctant prospects with pushy salespeople, it's not surprising that the average success rate when contacting new prospects has declined significantly. Depending on which article you read, the average "hit rate" for engaging new prospects is between 2 and 5 percent. So, out of every one hundred sales calls, the average salesperson will uncover only a small handful of qualified opportunities. What if we could change that? What if this initial call number could be increased to as much as 70 or 80 percent? Would that help your selling efforts? One of my goals when I first developed QBS was to simplify the sale. We accomplished this by identifying the activities, strategies, and actions that increase your probability of success, and then incorporated those things into the sales process. But, rather than ignore the n...

I have a large collection of "sales books". The reason why I put Question-Based Selling (QBS) so high on my list is mainly due to the content being successfully used across multiple industries and many different sales environments. There are a few chapters that could be updated (reason for 4 and not 5 stars), but the fundamentals of asking the right questions will always be key to being a successful salesman. QBS does not replace predictable revenue, The Sales Bible, or Challenger Sale. It is a compliment to all other sales processes. I have used what I learned door to door, to selling B2B SaaS solutions currently.

I read a number of sales books as I grew to understand that my job was 90% sales, knowing I'm not a sales guy at heart... my close circle is 99% engineer types. This book gave some very practical pieces of information to help craft cold contacts with new prospects like how to start with simpler direct closed questions to begin building momentum before transitioning to the open ended questions which really start hitting home. It also explained how curiosity is the key to the rest of the sales process, however, it didn't provide as much explicit instructions or example of exactly how to elicit curiosity. The Implications section is similar to the personal aspect of the Sandler pain funnel and is absolutely necessary to understand. All in all, it has enough practical advice that can be implemented to make this book worth reading.

For students of the practice of selling, QBS is at graduate school level. While the content is challenging and powerful, Thomas Freese's writing style and format make it readily doable. I've learned more from him in a few days careful, focused, thoughtful study than from all previous sales reading combined. This book has closed a bunch of gaps and opened a world of opportunity.

Exceptional value.

This book is really detailed on how to ask question after question in order to lead a customer down the right path to make a sale. No doubt question based selling is more effective than show and tell when done correctly, but mastering the techniques are not as simple as often portrayed. If you are going to use this book, use it more like a text book that you reference one a daily or weekly basis. Reading this straight through is difficult but necessary the first time.

Great read.

I really struggled finding a star rating with this book. I went from 2 to 3 to 4 and all around again. You see I first learned of Tom Freese from a sales seminar I attended 8 years ago where Tom was the speaker. It completely changed my life and helped make me into the sales person I am today. I kept his training manual and my notes close to me for 8 years but never read his books. Finding myself in a new sales job I was sent to a sales seminar for our industry. It was phenominaly and I got so much information. I was so pumped when I left that I wanted to continue learning. I remembered my first true lessons in sales came from Tom and decided if I went back and read his books, it would help me continue my learning journey. I sadly have to say that I did not find the book very helpful. Tom comes from selling technology that truly companies can live without. I now sell a produce to restaurants. Every restaurant has produce. I never hear the objection, "We don't need onions in this restaurant." I only hear, "We are going with someone else for onions." I feel like a vast majority of this book was geared towards getting prospects interested in talking to you and convincing them that their business could benefit from your product. I personally don't really need to convince any restaurant that they need onions. Now some parts of the book were helpful. They did provide me with some small tips here and there. However, with the time I spent reading the book, I am not sure I got enough out of it to say it is for me. If you are in the right industry selling to a certain client, this book could change your entire life. I know Tom has done that for many people including me earlier in my career. So I hope people do find it helpful as I am sure many will.

As someone who works in the enterprise sales world, this book and the anecdotes were both relevant and applicable in my day-to-day. Probably a must read for people interested in sales.

Outstanding Book. This should be in the library of every sales person! We have made it required

reading for all new employees.

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