



Ask! It's A Verb, Not A Mystery

by Debra K. Traverso

It's official!

The statistics are in, the research complete, the digging done. (Those years as a research journalist have come in handy).

The results say that, in the history of mankind, no one has ever gotten, from anybody, the sales opportunities that they so deeply desired without having first hinted, cajoled, begged, shmoozed, marketed, advertised, pointedly voiced, or blatantly requested what they wanted.

To put it more succinctly -- If you wanna' get, you gotta' ask.

Why? Because according to researchers at the University of Common Sense and Obvious Understatement, people can't read one another's minds! Imagine that.

What's more, according to Itsa I. Opener, the University's Chairperson of Embarrassingly Overlooked Truisms, this law of nature was probably first chiseled in clay as 'Thou Shalt Ask for What Thou Want.'

Asking questions is key to success in sales, particularly in real estate. Of course, effective selling often involves asking without the use of question marks -- in those cases it's more a matter of demonstrating, modeling, sharing, and convincing, while still collecting insight into prospects' needs, but that's another column.

For now, let's look at these five opportunities to ask questions:

Ask for the job.

You probably shouldn't ask, "May I list your house?" Rather than admire your eagerness, prospects might loathe your pushiness. However, selling is all about asking questions, then diagnosing how your service can solve the prospects' problems.

Good questions to ask: "What are you looking for in a REALTOR[®]?" "What would it take to earn your confidence?" "What -- if anything -- did you not like about your last experience with an agent?" "On the average, my homes sell within three weeks -- would that work for you?"

Ask for referrals.

Be direct in your request. Clients might need this message clubbed over their heads before it sinks in. Perhaps they assume, because you are so good, that you are busy enough already. To ask for a referral without looking desperate for work, start with a compliment.

For example: "John, I would like to work with more clients like you (Interpretation -- you've got lots of clients, but you want more like HIM). Do you have any business contacts who could benefit from my services? If so, would you give them a call or arrange for us to meet?" (Where possible, get the contacts' names and John's permission to call them yourself)



Ask for testimonials.

Ask for specifics and examples when you receive testimonials. Look for comfortable opportunities to share your successes with prospects.

For example: "I had the opportunity to assist Acme Corporation when they opened their new office. I helped 12 relocating employees find new homes within one month."

Ask for insight.

Your family, your friends, everyone in the circle of your everyday, should be able to comfortably and accurately explain what it is you do and how you do it differently. Ask them to tell you what it is they think you do.

For example: When I asked my son to explain my work, he said, "You clean up people's business cards with one number, Mom." Well, that's true; but that's a mere side benefit of my company's Mobile Manager service. So, I gave him some training. Sure enough, just two weeks later when he became ill, he explained to the school staff why they could reach me anywhere, anytime, with the one number listed on his emergency contact card. When I arrived to get him, I encountered more discussion about the service than about my son!

Ask for improvement.

Be sure to ask yourself questions too, such as "If I were a competing REALTOR, how would I beat me?"

For example: When going on a listing appointment or working with a buyer, do you ask them what their expectations are of a REALTOR? By knowing your clients expectations of you, you can ask questions such as "Remember how one of the three things you wanted in a REALTOR was to be honest? Well, we need to discuss a price reduction." Or, "Remember during our initial consultation, you said that what you expected from me was to communicate with you on a regular basis, right? Well, in order for us to communicate, I need you to be sure to return my calls and to make it a priority to keep our appointments, that way we will be sure to meet our move in deadline, right?"

Remember to always under promise and over deliver every time and you will create raving fans!