



# Resource Library

## Open Ended Questions Exercise

Most sales leaders understand the importance of their reps asking questions and assessing the needs of prospective customers before presenting solutions. But actually getting reps to stop talking about their products and listen to their customers first can be a difficult endeavor. This best practice exercise from an EcSELL Institute member helps teach your reps how to effectively ask more open-ended questions to better understand customer needs.

### Pre-Exercise Planning:

Schedule a meeting with your sales team to develop their ability to ask open-ended questions. Prior to the meeting, you will need to type up at least one sales scenario for each of your reps. Each scenario should include two things:

- A brief description of a sales situation with a fictional prospect that you will share with the rep (For example: “You are following up with a prospect you met at an industry trade show,” “You are holding the initial phone call with a referral from an existing customer,” or “You are meeting with a new contact in a different division of a current customer.”)
- A list of the key data about the fictional prospect and their needs that you will NOT share with the rep (For example: the prospect grew revenue by 10% last year, the prospect is unhappy with their current vendor, the prospect wants to expand their business in a new market)

### Role Play Exercise:

In the meeting, choose a scenario for each rep and share the description of the sales situation with them (again, do NOT share the key data). Explain that you will play the role of the prospect and they will play the role of the rep. Tell them they have 10 minutes to ask you as many open-ended questions to learn about the prospect’s business and needs. Also, let them know that you are keeping track of how much of the key data they are unable to uncover, as well as how many open-ended vs. close-ended (yes/no) questions that they ask. You may want to assign someone else to keep track of open-ended vs. close-ended questions asked so you can stay focused on playing the part of the prospect.

### Post-Exercise De-Brief:

Once the ten minutes are up, let the rep know how well they did by sharing the following information:

- The number of open-ended vs. close-ended questions they asked
- How many of the key data points about the prospects’ business or needs they uncovered

You could make this exercise a fun competition and give a prize to the rep that asks the most open-ended questions or uncovers the most key data points. After every rep on your team has gone, discuss as a group how you can become more effective at asking open-ended questions. The goal is to create a fun, interactive and memorable learning experience for your team!