



Are you asking questions to uncover real needs?

“Customers don’t want trucks” said Lucas. Coming from the CEO of TT Trucks (TTT) this was a stunner. “What they want is”, he went on to explain to his Sales Managers and Product team, “A cost-effective system that moves ore from their mines on time”.

Deep Earth Mines and Ores (DEMO) was a key relationship with a 20% share in TTT’s topline. It was a young mine with offtake rising sharply. Their current fleet built almost entirely with TTT’s 10 ton dumpers was clearly not adequate. TTT’s KAM team had been meeting them up regularly. Yet, a week ago DEMO had bought a new dumper from the competition.

Lucas continued with his story – “Worried, if there were any quality issues with TTT’s vehicles, I sent our product team to DEMO Mines, only to be told that they have bought a 16 tonner for immediate use. Given their present offtake levels, it made economic sense for them to buy a 16 tonner, as that can cut down the number of sorties per day. It will rein in fuel costs, maintenance, driver salaries, insurance and a whole lot of other fixed expenses. The tragedy is that, we have 16 tonners to offer off our shelves and still lost this deal to competition. If only we hadn’t got fixated on the 10 tonners! What stopped us from asking the Customer “What are your current challenges?” or “Given the increasing production in your mines, how are you planning to meet your transportation needs?”

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“Learn to question like Sherlock Holmes”, sales freshers are told “That’s the way to understand what’s going on in your Customers’ mind. No salesperson would say he doesn’t. The truth, however is that if and when a salesperson asks questions, they come more from a self-centric rather than Customer-centric point-of-view. Selling what I have becomes more important often, than selling what the Customer needs. You can never be sure if such salespeople first understand the Customer’s need and then try to fill that need with the relevant product and service. Or, if they simply aim to fulfil an assumed need?

The time tested axiom in selling: ***Never present a feature unless the need is clear.*** And this need should be:

1. Need as recognized by the Customer
2. Not the ***need for a product***, but ***need in the usage*** of product
3. Need as shaped by preferences of the Customer as an individual

The only way to uncover the real needs of the Customer, is to practice the skills of curious questioning and active listening. For an in-depth understanding of the Power of Questions as a tool for effective selling, access the Mercuri Insight document on [Understanding Customer needs. The power of asking questions.](#)

Is it now clear what Lucas was driving at? Could TTT have avoided loss of that deal to competition? How?