

Probing Questions That Agents Can Ask Customers to Deliver a Great CX

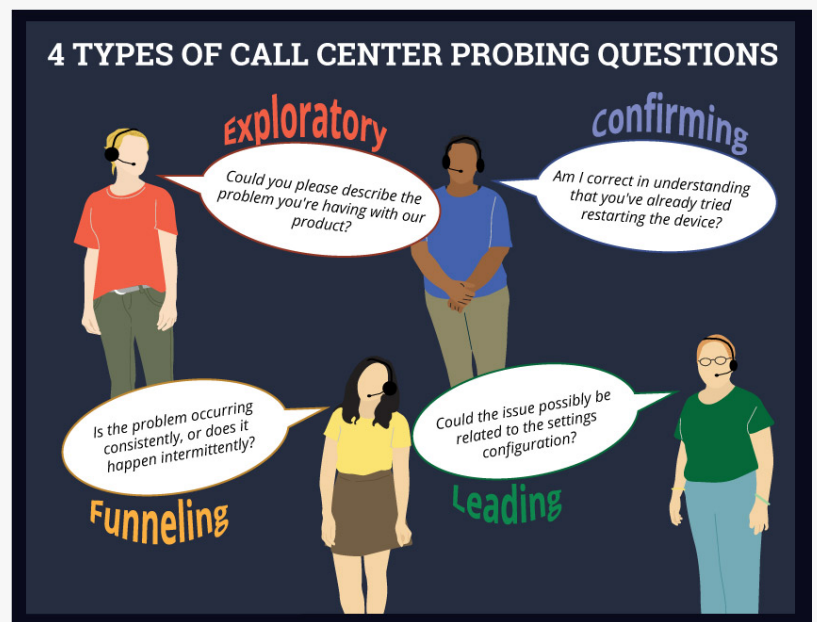
This blog will discuss techniques and give examples of open-ended questions that can be asked to improve customer service experience and improve Csat.

VERNON, BC, CANADA, September 12, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Maybe there is no such thing as a dumb question, but there certainly are questions that are better than others. This blog will discuss techniques and give examples of probing or open-ended questions that can be asked to improve customer service experience and improve [customer satisfaction](#).

Asking the right question in the right way can make a significant difference in customer service. The way a question is phrased could either come across as accusatory or as genuinely curious. The tone of voice can also influence how friendly an agent's question comes across. Many factors play into how a question is perceived and, thus, how a question is answered.

[SQM research](#) shows that 93% of customers using the call center channel and 72% of customers using the website channel expect to resolve their inquiry or problem on the first contact. Therefore, [first call resolution](#) (FCR) is critical to achieving high customer satisfaction (Csat) scores and meeting customer expectations. Asking the right open questions to understand better a customer's call reason is a driving factor in resolving the issue on the first contact.

The number one thing that is the most important to customers is resolving the call reason on the first call. Therefore, a crucial question to ask the customer near the end of the call is: "Have I resolved the reason for your call today?" The customer is the judge as to whether the agent has



effectively resolved their inquiry or problem.

Probing Questions Definition

Probing questions are open-ended questions that uncover more profound insights into customer issues. These questions aim to gather specific details, understand underlying concerns, and allow agents to provide more tailored solutions.

Here are some open-ended questions examples: "Could you provide me with the specific error message you're seeing?" or "Is there anything that might have triggered this situation?" These probing questions allow agents to diagnose problems accurately and offer practical assistance.

Probing questions also fosters customer rapport, demonstrating a genuine interest in understanding and addressing the customer's needs. This approach goes beyond surface-level troubleshooting, enabling agents to identify root causes and provide comprehensive support, ultimately enhancing the overall customer experience.

In call centers, probing questions are integral to customer service interactions. These thoughtfully crafted questions enable agents to delve deeper into customer issues, understand unique requirements, and identify potential solutions. Examples include asking for specific details about the problem, inquiring about the impact on the customer's activities, or seeking context on previous occurrences.

Agents can pinpoint the core problem and provide personalized assistance by actively listening to responses and adapting follow-up questions. Probing questions not only leads to more accurate issue resolution but also establishes a rapport that emphasizes the customer's value and contributes to positive, meaningful interactions within the call center environment.

The Importance of Asking Probing Questions In a Call Center

Probing questions helps clarify misunderstandings. By asking questions, agents avoid confusion and better understand the customer's problem or inquiry. This avoids relying on assumptions, which can cause frustrations down the road.

Asking open questions improves an agent's active listening skills. This helps customers feel more connected to the agent and makes the customer feel heard.



Probing questions allows agents to understand the specifics. By encouraging the customer to elaborate or provide more information, the agent can get to the root of the problem. It also gives the agent more opportunity to empathize with the customer because they have a better grasp of the issue.

Most importantly, asking probing questions helps an agent to be more likely to resolve a customer's inquiry or problem on the first call. After all, what matters to customers the most is resolving their call reason in a timely matter.

4 Types of Call Center Probing Questions

1. Exploratory Questions

Exploratory questions are open-ended inquiries encouraging customers to share more detailed information about their situation. They help agents gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Exploratory question examples:

"Could you please describe the problem you're encountering with our product?"

"Can you walk me through the steps you took before experiencing this issue?"

"What other factors might be contributing to your challenges?"

2. Funneling Questions

Funneling questions are designed to gradually narrow down information and focus on specific aspects of the problem. They help agents clarify and pinpoint the root cause of the issue.

Funneling question examples:

"Are you experiencing this issue on a specific device or across multiple devices?"

"Is the problem occurring consistently, or does it happen intermittently?"

"Have you noticed any patterns in terms of time or usage when this issue arises?"

3. Confirming Questions

Confirming questions validate the information gathered so far, ensuring that agents understand the customer's situation correctly before proceeding with assistance.

Confirming question examples:

"Just to confirm, you see a '404 Error' message when accessing the website. Is that correct?"

"Am I correct in understanding that you've already tried restarting the device?"

"Is it accurate to say that the issue started after the latest software update?"

4. Leading Questions

Leading questions guide customers toward a potential solution or direct them to consider certain factors. While useful in some situations, they should be used sparingly and transparently to avoid manipulating the conversation.

Leading question examples:

"Have you considered checking your internet connection as a possible cause of the slow loading?"

"Would you be interested in trying our premium support package to receive faster assistance?"

"Could the issue possibly be related to the settings configuration? Maybe we could explore that angle."

When to Ask Probing Questions in a Call Center

It can be easy to get caught up in the emotion and forget about the facts of the actual problem. For example, a customer may call customer support after repeatedly trying to connect to the internet without success. At this point, they are probably frustrated and no longer calm. Probing questions is helpful in these situations to get a clearer picture of the issues since the customer might struggle to explain them clearly without an agent's help.

Probing questions also allows the agent to understand better how the customer feels, which might change how they talk to the customer. If the customer is distraught, they will improve the customer experience (CX) by using empathy statements and speaking in a gentler tone of voice.

How to Coach Agents to Ask the Right Probing Questions

To coach call center agents in asking the right probing questions, establish clear guidelines, and provide comprehensive training emphasizing active listening skills and the importance of customization for each customer.

Encourage using open-ended questions while cautioning against leading questions that may bias responses. Regular practice, feedback, and role-play sessions are essential, and continuous monitoring of agent interactions helps provide constructive feedback.

Promote knowledge sharing among agents, keep guidelines up-to-date, and recognize and reward exemplary performance. Finally, measure progress using key performance indicators to ensure that improved probing questions lead to enhanced customer service experience and satisfaction.

An excellent way to assist agents in improving their skills, including Csats, customer service, and QA, is to invest in mySQM™ Customer Service QA Software. This software empowers and engages agents with real-time CX feedback, quality assurance, coaching, and recognition to deliver great CX. This includes coaching agents on better questioning techniques that allow agents to understand the problem or inquiry on a deeper level.

SQM's QA software combines phone calls, quality assurance, and post-call survey data into one fully integrated software for managing customer service data. SQM's QA software assists call center agents and managers in tracking, benchmarking, and improving FCR, Csats, NPS, quality assurance, costs, and customer service.

How to Improve Probing Questions

Avoid Leading Questions

Leading questions can inadvertently steer customers toward a particular response, potentially limiting the information gathered. Call center agents create a more open and unbiased conversation by avoiding leading questions.

This allows customers to express their concerns and provide unfiltered information freely. In turn, this leads to a better understanding of the customer's needs and issues, enabling agents to offer more accurate and relevant solutions, ultimately improving the customer service experience.

Avoid Starting a Question With "Why"

Beginning a question with "Why" can sometimes come across as confrontational or judgmental to customers, potentially making them defensive. Instead, framing questions more neutrally or positively encourages a smoother and more productive conversation.

Customers are more likely to share their experiences and issues openly when they don't feel like they're being interrogated. This approach fosters a more positive and customer-friendly atmosphere in the call center, enhancing the overall customer service experience.

Don't Interrupt

Interrupting customers can be frustrating and disrespectful, making them feel unheard or disregarded. By patiently listening without interruption, call center agents convey empathy and respect for the customer's perspective.

This lets customers fully articulate their concerns, ensuring agents have all the necessary information to provide effective assistance. A non-interruptive approach also demonstrates

professionalism and courtesy, contributing to a more positive customer service interaction.

Don't Be Vague

Vague or unclear questions can lead to confusion and misunderstandings between agents and customers. Precision in questioning is crucial for gathering precise information. When agents ask clear and specific questions, they elicit clear and specific answers.

This expedites issue resolution and minimizes the risk of miscommunication and frustration. Clarity in communication is a cornerstone of effective customer service in a call center, ensuring that agents and customers are on the same page and working towards a solution efficiently.

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