

# means needs *vs.* ends needs

When you can recognize the difference, you can turn one-off prospects into long-term clients.

I closed last month's article with the proposition that this month we would dig deeper into needs analysis to show you exactly how to find out what your prospects *really* need – and that's not always what they *think* they need. That's a strong statement. How could we possibly presume to know what our clients need, even above what they think they need and what they say they need? We know because we ask – and we listen.

There are means needs and there are *ends* needs. Means needs surface in companies as problems that need to be solved. These problems can be either tactical or strategic, but if you're focused on solving means needs, you'll find yourself "closing deals" rather than "enrolling clients."

If you go into your prospect's office and accept what he or she has represented to be "the problem," and you close the deal by solving the problem, then the door closes behind you when you leave. You're going to have to open it again to get the next deal done, and that's if someone else doesn't get there before you to ask, "What's next?" See, in this situation, with this mindset, your solution was a means to an end (or a step toward an outcome) of which you may not have even been aware.

Again, means needs are about solving tactical and strategic problems. Ends needs are about helping organizations achieve their missions and reach their goals. Now which would you rather your solution be associated with? The ends need, of course. And so would the client.

People are much more emotionally connected to their ends need (mission and goals) than their means need (the immediate problem) – and much more connected to you when you are helping them reach their ends need and achieve their outcomes. Demonstrate to them that you understand their outcome and provide a solution that helps them reach it, and you're a partner. Close them on the first problem they were willing to reveal and you're a vendor.

The first need that a prospect reveals is

almost always a means need and hardly ever the only need for three reasons:

1. The prospect doesn't know what the ends need is.
2. The prospect is not ready to reveal the ends need because you have not built enough trust. (Remember the Trust Model: reliability, sincerity and competence.)
3. You have not asked the right questions.



Jason Pappas

Your mission is to find out what the prospect really needs versus what he or she thinks and says the need is. Your mission is to discover the need and help the prospect achieve the mission. Your goal is to help the prospect achieve his or her goals.

How? I said last month that you must ask questions and must be listening two times as much as you are speaking. Keep in mind that as you sit with a client, just because you are not talking does not mean that you are listening – we are often just waiting to speak. You must be totally present for the other person, as if he or she is the only other person in the world. You must ask open-ended business questions and you have to be ready when the opportunity presents itself. And it will. If you are asking questions and listening intently, and staying in rapport, the prospect will reveal his or her goal to you. This is a process called "peeling the onion," where your job as a sales profession-

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al is to peel the layers of means needs away to discover the core ends need by continually asking empowering, open-ended questions.

The goal might be to increase operational efficiency by 15%, or to open an overseas office by March, or to be recognized for innovation by industry peers, or to spend more time with family. The goal is rarely just money. Money is primarily a means to an end. Money helps people achieve goals, but is rarely the goal itself – it is rarely a person's "mission in life" to make money. And though businesses are certainly in business to make money, it is rare to hear a mission statement like this: "Our mission is to make money." Microsoft's stated goal at inception was "To be the intelligence of all computers." Succeed in a mission like that and money will certainly follow.

How do you know when you've gotten to the ends need? When I was in law school, they gave me the same assignment they give all first-year law students: a case study that requires *a lot* of research. So how do you know when you've done enough research? Likewise, how do you know when you've reached the ends need of a prospect?

You know you've reached the ends need of a prospect when the same needs keep coming up through different questions and series of questions. This is the same as in law school – you're done when you keep finding the same cases in your research.

You made the choice not to accept the problem at face value and simply close the deal on the table. You continued to ask questions, and you listened. And that is only the beginning of a long partnership.

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