



36 Critical Sandler Pain Funnel Questions **to Rev Up Your** **Closing Game**

Let's cut to the chase! Every call is a golden opportunity, and we all know time wasted is money lost. At Outdoo, we've re-engineered the classic Sandler Pain Funnel into 36 razor-sharp questions that get straight to the heart of your prospect's challenges.

We've organized these questions into six actionable steps—guiding you from the initial greeting all the way to sealing the deal. Whether you're leading a seasoned team or coaching fresh talent, this playbook is your no-fluff toolkit to power up discovery calls and drive real results.

Step 1: Initial Engagement & Discovery

Kick off the conversation by setting the stage and building rapport. These questions help you understand the prospect's environment and motivations.

Questions & Tips:

1. "What inspired you to explore new solutions this year?"

Tip: Tap into their motivation and underlying drivers for change.

Sales Rep: "What inspired you to explore new solutions this year?"

Prospect: "We're noticing market shifts that make us rethink our current tools."

2. "Can you share your top priorities for this quarter?"

Tip: Uncover where their focus lies and align your discussion accordingly.

3. "How do you define success for your team in today's competitive landscape?"

Tip: Identify key benchmarks and performance metrics.

4. "What recent industry changes have caught your attention?"

Tip: This opens up a conversation about external influences shaping their strategy.

5. "How big is your team, and what roles are most critical in your operations?"

Tip: Understand the scale and structure of their organization.

6. "Who are the key decision-makers driving change in your organization?"

Tip: Map out the landscape of influence early on.

Step 2: Uncovering Hidden Challenges

Dig deeper to reveal surface-level problems and inefficiencies that might be flying under the radar.

Questions & Tips:

1. "Can you walk me through your current [Operational Area] process?"

Tip: Gain a clear view of how things work on the ground.

2. “What recurring challenges do you face that rarely get addressed?”

Tip: Identify issues that are often overlooked or considered “normal.”

3. “Have you noticed any minor issues that have unexpectedly escalated?”

Tip: Encourage storytelling to reveal latent problems.

4. “Is there an area in your operation where things don’t seem to run as smoothly as they should?”

Tip: Invite honest reflection on process inefficiencies.

5. “What early warning signs do you see that indicate potential bottlenecks?”

Tip: Uncover subtle indicators of larger issues.

6. “How long have these challenges been impacting your team?”

Tip: Understand the duration and persistence of the problem.

Step 3: Digging into Business Impact

Connect the dots between operational issues and their effects on overall business performance.

Questions & Tips:

1. “How is this challenge affecting your overall business performance?”

Tip: Tie the problem to their strategic outcomes.

Sales Rep: “How is this challenge affecting your overall business performance?”

Prospect: “It’s really slowing us down, impacting both productivity and revenue.”

2. “What solutions have you tried so far, and how effective have they been?”

Tip: Learn from past attempts and set the stage for a better alternative.

3. “How do these issues impact your revenue and profit margins?”

Tip: Ask for tangible numbers to highlight the financial toll.

4. “What costs are you incurring as a result of these inefficiencies?”

Tip: Pinpoint the direct and indirect expenses linked to the problem.

5. “Can you quantify the productivity loss caused by these challenges?”

Tip: Convert qualitative pain into measurable figures.

6. **“How does solving these issues bring you closer to your strategic objectives?”**

Tip: Align their resolution with long-term business goals.

Step 4: Exposing Emotional Impact

Uncover the human side of the problem by exploring how these issues affect team morale and overall energy.

Questions & Tips:

1. **“How is your team feeling about these ongoing challenges?”**

Tip: Understand the emotional climate around the issue.

2. **“Who else in your organization is feeling the impact of these challenges?”**

Tip: Identify how widespread the concern is.

3. **“What would happen if these problems continue unchecked?”**

Tip: Highlight the potential for escalation.

4. **“Does this situation create frustration or stress among your team?”**

Tip: Tap into the emotional drivers that could accelerate change.

5. **“How committed is your organization to resolving these issues now?”**

Tip: Gauge their urgency and readiness for a solution.

6. **“What personal toll do these challenges take on your day-to-day operations?”**

Tip: Encourage reflection on the broader impact beyond metrics.

Step 5: Envisioning the Resolution

Help your prospect imagine a brighter future where these pain points are resolved.

Questions & Tips:

1. **“What does an ideal solution look like for your organization?”**

Tip: Invite them to paint a picture of success.

Sales Rep: “What does an ideal solution look like for your organization?”

Prospect: “I envision a system that streamlines workflows and integrates seamlessly with our existing tools.”

2. “How would resolving these issues transform your team’s productivity?”

Tip: Focus on the positive changes a solution could bring.

3. “What key features are essential for the solution to be a game-changer?”

Tip: Identify the non-negotiable elements from their perspective.

4. “How do you see a successful solution changing your customer experience?”

Tip: Connect internal improvements to external benefits.

5. “What improvements would make the biggest impact on your operations?”

Tip: Zero in on high-priority changes.

6. “If you could wave a magic wand, what one thing would you change about your process?”

Tip: Use this creative prompt to reveal their top priority.

Step 6: Driving Towards Decision

Wrap up the conversation by setting the stage for commitment and next steps.

Questions & Tips:

1. “What would give you confidence in moving forward with a solution?”

Tip: Uncover the assurances they need to see.

Sales Rep: “What would give you confidence in moving forward with a solution?”

Prospect: “Seeing solid ROI data and successful case studies would be a major plus.”

2. “What are the key factors in your decision-making process?”

Tip: Understand their criteria for a final choice.

3. “How soon do you need to see results to justify a change?”

Tip: Establish a timeline that reflects urgency.

4. “Who else needs to be involved in the final decision?”

Tip: Identify all key stakeholders.

5. “What would be a deal-breaker when choosing a solution?”

Tip: Address potential objections upfront.

6. “How do you envision the next steps once a decision is made?”

Tip: Map out a clear path from decision to implementation.

Bonus Section: Pitfalls, Quick Fixes & Pro Tips

Even the best discovery calls can hit a snag. Here are common pitfalls—and some hard-hitting stats to help you steer the conversation like a pro:

○ **Overloading with Questions:**

Pitfall: Bombarding your prospect can turn a friendly chat into an interrogation.

Stat: Our research shows that high-performing calls average around 16 questions for 20–40 minute sessions and 23 for 40–80 minute sessions.

Quick Fix: Stick to your flow and pivot to a conversational tone if you sense overwhelm.

○ **Not Listening Enough:**

Pitfall: Cutting off the prospect can shut down valuable insights.

Stat: Top calls in our data feature a “longest customer story” of about 115 seconds—proving that when prospects get ample uninterrupted time, trust and insight flourish.

Quick Fix: Let your prospect do most of the talking—aim for a talk-to-listen ratio of roughly 1:2.

○ **Skipping the Quantification:**

Pitfall: Vague answers can leave the true impact of the problem unmeasured.

Stat: Sales reps who tie pain points to measurable outcomes see up to a 30% improvement in their question-to-close ratio.

Quick Fix: Always ask for figures—even rough estimates—to convert qualitative pain into tangible metrics.

○ **Poor Transitions:**

Pitfall: Abrupt topic shifts can derail the conversation flow.

Stat: Reps who segment their calls into structured phases, like our six-step approach, witness a 25% boost in qualifying opportunities.

Quick Fix: Use bridging phrases such as, “That’s insightful—let’s explore how this impacts your bottom line,” to ensure smooth transitions.

○ **Follow-Up Engagement:**

Pitfall: Failing to capture post-call momentum can stall the deal.

Stat: Teams that schedule follow-up meetings based on detailed discovery calls report a 40% higher conversion rate.

Quick Fix: Nail down next steps and ensure every call ends with a clear plan for moving forward.

Guilty of leaving revenue on the table by not reviewing sales calls?

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