



A Rogue's Guide to

Navigating Business Value: 10 Questions You Need to Ask



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Not all projects, products, nor processes are created equal.

Sometimes, business value is more easily ascertained than others.

It may not always be necessary to ask all of the following, but depending on where things are, they can help unravel that message in a bottle.





PURPOSE *What's the motivation?*

1. Why do you need this?

Baby steps. In a perfect world, they'll call out a specific problem or task. Just know that often times, whether it's an internal or external customer, people will not necessarily understand the core reason themselves. Answers will span anything from incorrect to purposefully vague. Don't worry – the next few questions will help clear things up.

2. How will this be used? For what and how frequently?

“Picture yourself...” – let the customer paint the picture for you of how they envision using the product. This may be eye-opening for both parties and reveal opportunities for use that neither had thought of before.

Thought they'd only use it every once in a while? You might be surprised. This will all ultimately influence process/product design.



PROBLEM *What's the issue?*

3. How is the problem currently being managed?

This question is invaluable and will provide a great deal of insight toward the core reason why you, your product, and/or services have been engaged. The customer may already have an elegant solution. Their solution may be an imperfect way to keep the problem at bay. Heck, they may not be managing the problem at all! The customer's answer will allow you to come up with or tweak a solution that ultimately results in an outcome that addresses the customer root problem – and potentially then some.

4. What is the biggest pain point of how the problem is currently managed?

A natural follow-up to the previous question, this one really helps pinpoint the thorn in your customer's side and get to the heart of how you can help remove it.

Make sure to really listen and then dig in. Like many of us, the customer may not even be aware of how much of an inconvenience something is until they say it out loud and an alternative has been proposed. You know that old infomercial line – “*There's got to be a better way!*”? It totally applies here.



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POSITION

How much skin in the game?

5. How much time is currently spent on this problem? In a perfect world, how much time would you spend on it with our (or our product's) help?

Understand that unless your customer has identified time savings as a strategic objective or will indirectly use time saved to achieve other strategic objectives such as reduced headcount or reinvestment into other areas; time savings is not in itself a solid business value/outcome – but it does provide a useful goal in the process of structuring your solution.

6. How would your day-to-day change if we implement this?

This should be a conversation – the more honest, the better. Hopefully, the proposed solution will improve their day-to-day and they'll start thinking about all the other things they could be doing if they didn't have to worry about this issue anymore. Ultimately it could help you convince them of how much they need you and your product. If their lives are not somehow markedly improved – that's OK, too. Don't push. This is about building trust and in the end, business value.

7. How much money would you be willing to spend to fix the problem?

The juice has to be worth the squeeze, right? Unless the outcome justifies the spend, they're likely not going to want to buy your product. There's no need to sell a customer a luxury car if all they really needed was a bicycle. Pay attention and structure your solution accordingly.



POST

How are we doing?

8. What is the best – and worst – feature?

You obviously want to know what you're doing right! However, you also want to know what a customer believes you could improve. Don't take it personally! It may help uncover a gap that wasn't caught during requirements gathering, it might just be a matter of training – it might even be something that another customer loves! Just be sure to pay attention here.

9. Why us?

If you're at this point, the customer made a conscious decision to choose you over your competitors. Hopefully you're well versed enough in the competition to name them and ask the customer what tipped the scales in your favor. Allowing the customer to explain why rather than stating why you're the best helps build that trust and will hopefully result in them sticking with you longer.



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10. What were your expectations and did this meet your expectations?

No leading the witness! This is meant to be open-ended. You want the customer to reflect on the engagement – the process, the product and services rendered, and whether the outcomes aligned with the objective. Sometimes the answer may include some surprises – things you don't necessarily want to hear; things you never thought to ask...

It's OK. It's all part of the process and extremely valuable knowledge that will help drive even more value down the road.

GO ROGUE.



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