

"SPIN" Coaching¹

Dr. Neil Rackham created Xerox's sales, sales coaching, and interpersonal skills programs. A social psychologist with a practical bent, he created a *very* effective way to approach a sale by attending carefully to the client's needs while keeping your own objectives in focus. These consist of a variety of *probing* skills.

You could consider a version of "schmoozing" to take place during the early stages, while *at the same time* you're shaping the conversation toward your desired outcomes. Drawing upon the psychological principle that people attend to what you *do* more than what you *say*, it's vital that a mentor coach use the *same* behaviors when teaching the method to someone else:

Situation Questions—These questions collect facts, information, and background data about the client's situation.

Problem Questions—These questions probe for problems, difficulties, or dissatisfactions.

Implication Questions—These questions *strengthen* clients' perception of their own needs; *Implication* questions raise *implied* needs to the level of *expressed* needs – clients feel their needs more strongly and thus have greater readiness to have those needs satisfied.

Need-Payoff Questions—Once *Implication* questions have raised a client's perception of needs, a second kind of question can increase the value of your solution. These are "positive solution-centered questions" (e.g., "How important is it to you to solve this problem?" "In what ways would this solution be useful?" "Is there any other way this could help you?"). *Need-Payoff* questions focus the client's attention on the *solution* rather than the problem. They also get the client to tell *you* the benefits.

¹ Neil Rackham first gained international recognition in the 1970's when he led the largest ever research study of successful selling. This massive project, supported by major multinationals including Xerox and IBM, involved a team of 30 researchers who studied 35,000 sales calls in more than 20 countries over a period of 12 years. From the results of these studies he published *SPIN® Selling and Major Account Sales Strategy*.