

Virtual meetings. Take care to engage people, don't fall into the trap of turning them into pitches and demonstrations. Remember to use questions.

36 EXCELLENT QUESTIONS

Please note. Questions are situational, only use those that are appropriate!

Small talk

There are, generally, five topics for small talk; news, hobbies, family, location and business.

One way to remember this is to create a picture or memory; Boris Johnson, playing football, with his children, at No 10, carrying a copy of the spectator.

1. I can't quite see those pictures behind you is that football?
2. I've been to (their town) a couple of times, what would you say are the two best things about it?
3. Out of interest while you've been on lockdown is there anything you've got good at?
4. What's your view, at the moment, on how things are going to pan out?

Permission to be nosey questions

5. It's important for me to understand you and your needs. Would you mind if I asked you a bit about your business?
6. All my clients have brilliant interesting businesses and they're quite diverse. I match what we do to them, so I'm going to ask you quite a lot about your staff and business objectives, I hope you don't mind me prying, is that okay with you?
7. I love my work here as our clients are some of the most interesting and exciting businesses in London. I need to match what we do, exactly, to your current situation and your likely future. I'm going to ask quite a few questions is that fair enough?
8. Today and once or twice a week you will be the most important client in my life. So, I need to understand you and what's important to you, this does mean I'm going to ask quite a few questions is that okay with you?

General get the ball rolling questions

9. Tell me about the business / department
10. To start with tell me a bit about your history and what you are doing now? I see you recently bought?
11. (our service) improves profit and the value of your business, I'll explain how later, to start with it would be nice to hear about the business and what you love about it.
12. Give me a potted history?
13. How did you get to where you are today?
14. Something's changed to bring us together, do you mind telling me what's happened?
15. When you agreed to meet you must have had some ideas of what you'd like to achieve?

Questions to understand their current reality. This will include pain from the past.

16. When it comes to employment law (or the topic at hand) what do you currently have in place?
17. Tell me what your different departments do?
18. If you were to give your current situation marks out of 10 what would you say?
 - a. People normally say 6-7 and your reply is "and what needs to happen to get it to 10"
 - b. Or "if you got it to 10, what would that mean to you / the department / the business / profit etc".
19. Tell me the impact these issues have on the people around you (your directors, your suppliers etc.)
20. Most of the people I'm talking to are quite rested now and are making quite clear decisions and plans. What are the key priorities for the (department, business etc.)?
21. Apart from you, who else needs to be involved in this and what part will they play?

Questions about change

22. When was the last time you had great success because you changed a supplier?
 - a. Do you mind telling me the process you went through and what happened?
23. It seems in this 'new normal' that businesses are having to experiment, what are you experiencing?
24. A lot of my clients have started making lists of things to do, has this happened to you? What are the priorities?

Questions to create fear

25. What would happen if you did nothing about this?
26. What changes have you seen your competitor making?
27. Do you think you can stay as you are now?
 - a. Why not?

Questions to uncover the risk in the status quo

28. What are you looking for in a (investment manager, platform provider, lawyer, etc.)?
 - a. How is that different from your current supplier?
29. What would you say is the most important thing I can do for you?
30. Tell me your thoughts on (the issue at hand)?
31. Coming back to the 6 out of 10, how would you feel if you did nothing about it? (or what are the consequences).

Questions to move to the next stage

32. Can you give me the three/five things you want my proposal to focus on?
33. I'll get the proposal to you by Friday, it would make sense to chat through once you've had time, shall we say a week on Wednesday, is that okay?
34. Who else needs to be involved from here on in?
 - a. So, when we chat next it'll need to be the three of us?
 - b. Are you okay if I introduce myself to them?
35. The value proposition saves you £3k per month can you see any reason why we shouldn't get on with this by June?

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36. When we do this for you, you'll start sleeping at night, when would like to start your sleep filled nights?

A quick lesson on questioning

There are two main types of questions; those that gather facts and those that gather opinion. These are often called closed and open questions.

A danger is that we just gather facts and fail to understand motivation. If we understand motivation and can tell people about themselves then we are differentiated. Here is a simple open question format.

Start with a flag

A simple instruction that you want a big answer

- "I was hoping you could tell me"
- "could you give me a good idea"

Use why, what and how. "what are your plans?"

To create more dialogue you might ask 2 questions in 1

"I was hoping you could tell me what your plans are and how do you hope to achieve them?"

Finally you might relate the question to an unimpeachable source.

I see you read this wonderful article on questioning by Peter Rosenwald, would you kindly tell me what you learnt and how you intend to use it?

