

CHAT OR SELL?

Go for chat and you could get it wrong; pitch your questions carefully and you could win a sale, says retail mentor Maria Musgrove



Don't ask pushy questions if you want to make good sales

Buying today? Budget? Brought the credit card? Much as we would love to ask these questions they're more likely to result in a one-star review than a relaxed and ready-to-buy bride. Equally ineffective is the inane chat common at the hairdressers re the weather, which will put the bride at ease but won't help get the sale.

The challenge is to make every question count without your bride thinking that she's wandered on to the set of *Homeland* and is being interrogated Carrie vs Brody style on a matter of national security. My training course is about developing your sales talk and minimising your sales chatter – unless it elicits key information that moves along the appointment.

Make every question count so that you clinch the sale. In his book, *Secrets of Question Based Selling*, Tom Freese says: "The questions you ask are more important than the things you could ever say." Many brides bring half of their congregation with them so my first question is 'So where's my bride to be?' Don't think that it's too basic, because haven't we all mistaken the older person as Mum when she's actually the bride? It also shows her that she's special and not 'You're my two o'clock!'

Next ask, 'Who is here to help you find your dress?' – find out their names and use

them as it's equally important to create a relationship with the entourage as well as with the bride. I once sold a dress purely because the group were so impressed that I had taken the time to ask their names.

'It looks like we have everyone present to help you find your perfect dress, haven't we?' This plants the idea that she could be buying today and teases out if any key person is missing. If she has to bring back her great aunt twice removed, or best friend she hasn't seen since primary school, you could respond

later in the appointment with 'Do you need her approval or do you just want her to see it? You can bring her in at your accessory appointment.'

To find out where she is at in her search for the dress, ask 'What have you done so far to find your gown?' This is less interrogatory than 'What other shops have you been to?' If she has been to other boutiques

follow up with 'How did you get on?' This can tease out if she's nervous, had the hard sell from other shops, is confused, etc, and can be a great guide as to how to conduct the appointment and win her over.

'Did you have a favourite?' If yes, ask about it and hope that she whips out a photo on her phone, or get the dress up on your computer, then find out how much she likes it. Follow up with 'Since you are here with

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me, it means that you still have some doubts about that dress.' This can either help create more doubt about the gown or give you an insight into how much she likes it.

Whether it's her first visit anywhere or she's confused, ask 'What's your bridal style, and where's your venue?' Notice if any of the members of her group start chipping in or if she defers to any of them as this can indicate who is in control. If she's finding it hard to answer then take control and say 'My job is to help you find your style and your job is to relax and enjoy yourself.'

She should now be at ease, you should have all the information to help her find 'the one' and all you have to do is persuade her to buy it!! But I'll need more than one A4 page to help you with that one!

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