

# Curious George - The Great Salesman

Steve White, President - Effectivation Inc.

In my early years as a quota carrying salesperson, one of my colleagues was nicknamed 'Curious George'. This nickname was well-earned. It was based on the fact that his name of course was George, but primarily because his customers felt that he was always very curious about their business and personal lives.

George had a consistent and effective way of getting his clients and prospects to reveal to him, their most important and underlying problems, concerns, issues and futures. This gave him a **significant advantage over competitors** who were only able to obtain 'surface-level' issues from these same customers. As a result, George was able to put forth a much **more compelling recommendation** than his competitors, as his solutions always focused on how he could address their underlying business and sometimes personal needs. Needless to say, George got **more than his fair share** of business and was very successful.

The question is – **How can you be more like Curious George?**

## ***It all starts with ATTITUDE!***

First of all, you must understand that George didn't want to be like all the sales people he knew and competed against. He wanted to be **different**. He wanted to win more than his fair share of business. So George followed a very simple rule:

**"Take into consideration and do one's best for a customer's interests and feelings."**

While this may sound very simple, most sellers are not good at consistently living by it. It's too tempting and **too easy to tell their story**, rather than focusing on understanding the customer's story.

## ***Nothing beats PLANNING!***

George recognised that taking the time to plan how he was going to conduct a meeting with a customer or prospect was a **great differentiator**, and a **valuable use of his time**. He was surprised to learn that **most sales people did not plan** for their meetings rather, they tended to 'wing them'.

George's pre-meeting planning included research on the customer's industry and business, as well as thinking about his desired outcome for the meeting. He also thought about how he would open the meeting, with some relevant small-talk first and then **getting the customer's attention** by telling them what they would get out of the meeting. George also found that customer's liked it when he shared his **meeting agenda** with them.

## ***It's all about the QUESTIONS!***

George knew that the only way to get the customer to reveal to him the underlying needs they really cared about, was to **ask the right questions at the right time**. This meant that he would have to pre-plan them, as he knew it was not easy to 'wing them'.

**Open questions** were George's favourite, and he was surprised by how willing customers were to answer them – sometimes in great detail. He recognised that these open questions were **conversation momentum builders**, unlike the closed questions other sellers tended to ask that were momentum killers.

George took care in planning the **wording, content, scope and sequencing** of his questions. He often found himself referring to his questions in the meeting, sometimes reading them directly from his meeting planner, in order to ask them the exact way he wanted. His customer's would often say – "That's a good question George" or "It's interesting you should ask this?"

### ***SHHHH! SILENCE is Golden!***

George knew the power of silence, and learned to be comfortable in the silence that naturally occurs in a dialogue between him and his customer. He used silence as a means with which to **get more information** from the customer, and it always surprised him how effectively it worked.

### ***Peeling the Onion through PROBING!***

As good as the planned questions George would ask were, he also found it necessary to be able to **probe deeper** for the information he needed. He found that when a customer raised an issue, he could probe more deeply by asking additional questions regarding the **meaning, reason, and significance** of the issue to the customer.

He was surprised by how easy it was and how often the underlying need was quite different than the initial issue that was raised. He also found it useful to ask for both the **business and personal significance** of the issue to the customer.

### ***In SUMMARY!***

George was really good at making sure he really understood what his customer or prospect had told him in the meeting. He did this by **summarizing back** to the customer the key issues he had uncovered in the meeting, and then asking them to **confirm** his understanding. Because he took good notes during the meeting, George's summaries were often quite accurate. However, there were times when George may have misunderstood the customer and because he asked for their confirmation, they made sure he understood where they were coming from.

### ***George GETS IT!***

Customers would often talk about their feeling that George "**gets it**". What they meant was that they felt George really understood both the personal and business significance of their key needs. Because he 'got it', his customers were confident that George would be able to put forth a **more concise and compelling recommendation than his competitors**. They appreciated the fact that George was very curious about their business, and that he took the time to **ask the right questions** and **probe** for a better understanding of their key issues.

As a result, 'Curious George' was a great salesman won more than his fair share of business.

**Steve White, President  
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Effectivation was established in 1986 to provide consultative selling and service skills training to information and knowledge-based enterprises. Effectivation clients include sales people and consultants in technology, telecommunications, financial services and professional services companies in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Effectivation trains people in consultative selling and client relationship skills. Our customised in-house workshops focus on the strategic and tactical skills that can help you and your company initiate, build and maintain long-term relationships with your clients.

If you are interested in building better relationships and becoming more curious about your clients business, please contact us at [info@effectivation.com](mailto:info@effectivation.com)