



## Mastering Technical Sales

2037 Trowbridge Drive

Newtown, PA 18940

Phone +1-215-431-1552

[John@masteringtechnicalsales.com](mailto:John@masteringtechnicalsales.com)

[www.masteringtechnicalsales.com](http://www.masteringtechnicalsales.com)

John Care, Managing Director

## Discovery Techniques

### The One Thing You Need To Know

*After five years of writing Talking Points and Mastering Technical Sales Newsletters I realized that not once have I written about the topic of Discovery. Which is the art and science of discovering exactly what your customer's business problem is, how much it's worth to fix it and then how to prove that your solution is uniquely qualified over all others to be purchased.*

Discovery is a very complicated topic, and not one that can be addressed or even summarized in 1,000 words. So instead - here is **Care's First Law Of Discovery**.

"Every business problem comes down to a single number. Either that number is too small and needs to be larger, or is too large and needs to be made smaller." <sup>1</sup>

Surely it can't be that simple? Well, think about what I now call the Three Wise Men and their Little Sister (or the Four Horsemen, Four Suits of Cards etc.). Every business executive or budget holder wants to accomplish the first three objectives and now the fourth is becoming increasingly important. They are:

**Increase Revenue**  
**Mitigate Risk**

**Decrease Expenses**  
**Raise Social Profile**

If you do nothing else in a Discovery session but determine a number or metric within one of these categories that is causing your customer a problem then you've made a great start. Bonus points for determining multiple numbers and corresponding problems because

---

<sup>1</sup> I formulated this in 1993. If anyone has a prior claim let me know!

you shouldn't stop after the first one. In fact the first business issue discussed is rarely the most important problem.

Now you determine the priority of the problems. Massive amounts of scientific research have shown that the best way to accomplish this is by asking the customer a question.

*"Which of these is the most important?"*

Then you determine which direction the "one number" needs to be heading - up or down? Once you have that you ask a series of questions along the lines of *"what is the number now and where would you like it to be in one year? In three years? What's the value of that?"*

Of course, the real art of Discovery comes in understanding that the customer never has the answer to all of these questions - and in fact very often hasn't thought about them too deeply. It becomes more like a detective novel to determine who owns the data, how savings or increases are measured, who puts a monetary value on that and so on.

And we haven't even gotten to the fun part of the SE job - which is eventually tying all the business, solutions and technology together to prove that your solution provides the best and most unique value in satisfying Care's First Law of Discovery - as seen by the customer. That last statement is important as the customer is buying the solution not you - so your opinion doesn't really count for much.

So find that single number for each business problem. You should ask the customer what they think it is. No matter which sales methodology you follow and how you accomplish all the auxiliary surrounding work (9 block models, A-B-C, current/desired state) the heart and soul of Discovery still comes down to the First Law. Try it!

**"The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions." – Peter Drucker.**

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at [www.masteringtechnicalsales.com](http://www.masteringtechnicalsales.com).

To receive the monthly Talking Points Newsletter, sign up at the website.