[The Four Step Process I Use When Probing For Pain](http://www.thejfblogit.co.uk/2011/05/23/the-four-step-process-i-use-when-probing-for-pain/)

Sales people involved in prospecting already know the challenges of persuading a prospect to give them the business, but very few recognize that there is actually a four-step process involved in buying, that all of us follow;

**Step One**: We have to feel MOTIVATED to make a purchase, irrespective of its type or size.

**Step Two**: At some point after we’ve become motivated to want to buy, we make a DECISION to buy.

**Step Three**: Then, after we have made a decision, we want to feel CONVINCED that our decision is the right one and at this stage we may seek approval and input from other people. Then we’ll make our purchase.

**Step Four**: Finally, after making our purchase we seek REASSURRANCE. Interestingly, if sales people haven’t nurtured newly acquired customers, this can result in ‘Buyer’s Remorse’ and the customer may get ‘cold feet’ and cancel their order.

Every step of this process requires careful handling, yet if the sales person lacks the ability to motivate their prospect to talk to them, let alone buy from them, the other steps become redundant.

It is now common knowledge that people are fundamentally motivated in two main ways:

1. What problem or pain they can avoid and move away from

2. What pleasure or benefit they can move towards

Imagine your alarm going off in the morning and you realise that you have to get out of bed. It’s just too warm and comfortable where you are, so you give yourself another five minutes. Then, after this time, you decide to lie in for another few minutes until you suddenly get a picture in your mind of your angry boss! The consequences of being late for your meeting with him scares you into jumping out of bed.

Alternatively, imagine your alarm going off on the morning of your holiday. The prospect of sun, sea and Sangria fills you with excitement as you jump out of bed to start your two week vacation.

If a prospect feels content with their current supplier or their current situation, then it will be a huge challenge to motivate them to want to buy your product or service. That’s why every pain your prospect feels is an opportunity for you.

Your task, during the initial fact-finding stage is to uncover their ‘pain’ and help them to dwell on their problems. The stronger the pain or the bigger their problem, the greater their motivation will be to move away from it. If you can convince prospects that your organization can reduce one or more of their ‘pains’, then you will have suddenly discovered a powerful way to unleash their motivation to buy from you.

Here are some examples of questions that probe for pain:

● “What areas of your current situation don’t you like?”  
● “What is this costing your organisation each year?”  
● “How do you feel about (problem)?”  
● “Who else is aware of these issues?”  
● “How do they feel about it?”  
● “Why haven’t you tackled this before?”  
● “How do your issues compare to those in similar organisations?”  
● “Which of these problems is causing you the most concern?”  
● “What have you done in the past that’s not worked?”  
● “When did you begin noticing this issue?”  
● “Why is this an issue for you?”  
● “When will you decide to resolve this?”

When probing for pain it’s more effective to start with general questions to build rapport, encourage discussion and plenty of input from the prospect.

As you begin using questions that probe for pain you’ll notice shifts in their body language that can provide you with important feedback that your questions are hitting the mark. Ideally, encourage the prospect to define the consequences of their problem, this magnifies the problem in their minds eye and consequently builds their motivation to want to get it solved.

Finally, you need to gain their commitment to resolving their problem by asking, “How committed are you to resolving this issue?”

“The secret of success is learning how to use pain and pleasure instead of having pain and pleasure use you. If you do that, you’re in control of your life. If you don’t, life controls you.” Anthony Robbins